

THE
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*THE INTRUSIONS OF PEGGY.*¹

BY ANTHONY HOPE.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF IT.

‘AND I think that’s an end of any worry about Beaufort Chance!’

It was a heartlessly external way of regarding a fellow-creature’s fate, but in relating how Connie Fricker had carried off her prisoner, and how subsequent despatches had confirmed his unconditional submission, Peggy had dealt with the narrative in a comedy vein throughout. Though she showed no gratitude to Beaufort, she owed him some as a conversational resource if in no other capacity; he enabled her to carry off the opening of her interview with Airey in that spirit of sturdy unemotionality which she desired—and was rather doubtful of maintaining. Coinciding in her wish and appreciating the device, Airey had listened with an applauding smile.

Peggy now made cautious approaches to more difficult ground.

‘So he’s off Trix’s mind,’ she concluded, sighing with relief. ‘And the other thing’s off her mind too. She’s heard from Mr. Fricker.’

‘Ah!’ Airey, who had been walking about, turned short round on her and waited.

‘Yes, she believes it all. He did it very well. As far as I’m concerned he’s behaved most honourably.’ Peggy had the air of giving a handsome testimonial. ‘She asked me no questions; she

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never thought I had anything to do with it; she just flew at me with the letter. You can't think what a difference it makes! She holds up her head again.'

'Is it quite fair?' he asked doubtfully.

'Yes, yes, for the present,' Peggy insisted. 'Perhaps she might be told some day.' She looked at him significantly.

'Some day? How do you mean?'

'When she can bear it.' Peggy grew embarrassed as the ground became more difficult. 'If ever other things made her feel that what had happened didn't matter, that now at all events people valued her, or—or that she'd rather owe it to somebody else than to herself or her own luck.'

He did not mistake her meaning, but his face was still clouded; hesitation and struggle hung about him still. Neither by word nor in writing had Peggy ever thanked him for what he had done; since she had kissed his hand and left him, nothing had passed between them till to-day. She guessed his mind; he had done what she asked, but he was still miserable. His misery perhaps made the act more splendid, but it left the future still in shade. How could the shade be taken away?

She gathered her courage and faced the perilous advance.

'You'll have observed,' she said, with a nervous laugh, 'that I didn't exactly press my—my contribution on you. I—I rather want it, Airey.'

'I suppose you do. But that's not your reason—and it wasn't mine,' he answered.

'Is it there still?' She pointed to the safe. He nodded. 'Take it out and give it to me. No, give me just—just twenty-five.'

'You're in a saving mood,' remarked Airey grimly, as he obeyed her.

'Don't shut the safe yet,' she commanded hastily. 'Leave it like that—yes, just half-way. What ogreish old bolts it's got!'

'Why not shut it?' he objected in apparent annoyance. Did the sight of its partial depletion vex him? For before Peggy could go to Fricker's, some of its hoard had gone to Tommy Trent.

'There's something to put in it,' she answered in an eager timid voice. She set her little bag on the table and opened it. 'You gave me too much. Here's some back again.' She held out a bundle of notes. 'A thousand pounds.'

He came slowly across to the table.

'How did you manage that?'

'I don't know. I never thought of it. He just gave them back to me. Here they are. Take them and put them in.'

He looked at them and at her. The old demon stirred in him; he reached out his hand towards them with his old eagerness. He had run over figures in his mind; they made up a round sum—and round sums he had loved. Peggy did not glance at him; her arms were on the table and her eyes studied the cloth. He walked away to the hearthrug and stood silent for a long while. There was no reason why he should not take back his money; no reproach lay in that, it was the obvious and the sensible thing to do. All these considerations the demon duly adduced; the demon had always been a plausible arguer. Airey Newton listened, but his ears were not as amenable as they had been wont to be. He saw through the demon's specious case. Here was the gate by which the demon tried to slip back to the citadel of his heart!

Peggy had expected nothing else than that he would take them at once. In a way it would have given her pleasure to see him thus consoled; she would have understood and condoned the comfort he got, and thought no less of his sacrifice. His hesitation planted in her the hope of a pleasure infinitely finer. The demon's plausible suggestions carried no force at all for her. She saw the inner truth. She had resolved not to look at Airey; under irresistible temptation she raised her eyes to his.

'That's not mine,' he said at last. 'You say Fricker gave it back to you. It's yours then.'

'Oh, no, that's nonsense! It's yours of course, Airey.'

'I won't touch it.' He walked across to the safe, banged it to, and locked it with savage decision; the key he flung down on the table. Then he came back to the hearthrug. 'I won't touch it. It's not mine, I say.'

'I won't touch it; it's not mine either,' insisted Peggy.

The despised notes lay on the table between them. Peggy rose and slowly came to him. She took his hands.

'Oh, Airey, Airey!' she said in whispered rapture.

'Bosh! Be business-like. Put them in your bag again.'

'Never!' she laughed softly.

'Then there they lie.' He broke into a laugh. 'And there they would, even if you left me alone with them!'

'Airey, you'll see her soon?'

'What the deuce has that got to do with it?'

'Nothing, nothing!' Her gaiety rose and would not be denied. 'A little mistake of mine! But what are we to do with them?'

'The poor?' he suggested. Peggy felt that prosaic, and shook her head. 'The fire? Only there isn't one. Spills? The buttermen?'

'They do crackle so seductively,' sighed Peggy.

'Hush!' said Airey with great severity.

Her heart was very light in her. If he could jest about the trouble, surely the trouble was well-nigh past? Could it be abolished altogether? A sudden inspiration filled her mind; her eyes grew bright in eagerness, and her laugh came full though low.

'How stupid we are! Why, we'll spend them, Airey!'

'What?' That suggestion did startle him.

'This very day.'

'All of them?'

'Every farthing. It'll be glorious!'

'What are we to spend them on?' He looked at them apprehensively.

'Oh, that won't be difficult,' she declared. 'You must just do as I tell you, and I can manage it.'

'Well, I don't know that I could have a better guide.'

'Go and put on your best clothes. You're going out with me.'

'I've got them on,' smiled Airey Newton.

'Oh, I beg your pardon!' cried Peggy in momentary distress. His face reassured her; they both fell to laughing.

'Well, anyhow,' she suggested, as a last resort, 'suppose you brush them?'

Airey had no objection to that, and departed to his room.

Peggy moved about in restless excitement, fired by her idea. 'First for her! And then——' She shook her head at her own audacity. Yet confidence would not die in her. Had she really struck on the way? Had not the demon summoned up all his most seductive arguments just because he was sore afraid? It was madness? 'Yes, madness to cure madness!' cried Peggy in her heart. A gift to the poor would not do that; the fire would consume and offer nothing in return. She would try.

Airey seemed to surrender himself into her hands; he climbed into the cab docilely. She had run down first and given the man a direction. Airey did not ask where they were going.

She opened the little bag, took out its contents, and thrust them into his hands; he pocketed them without a word. They drove westward. She glanced at him covertly once or twice; his face was puzzled but not pained. He wore an air of sedate meditation; it was so out of keeping with the character of the expedition that Peggy smiled again.

She darted another quick look at him as they drew up at their first destination. He raised his brows a little, but followed her in silence. Peggy gave a gasp of relief as they passed within the doors.

The shopman was not tall and prim, like the bank clerk; he was short, stout, and inclined to roguishness; his eyes twinkled over Peggy, but he was fairly at his wits' end for an explanation. They could not be an engaged pair; Airey's manner gave no hint of it—and the shopman was an experienced judge. Was it an intrigue? Really, in the shopman's opinion, Airey's coat forbade the supposition. He inclined to the theory of a doting uncle or a prodigal god-father. He tumbled out his wares in the profusion such a chance demanded.

At first Airey was very indifferent, but presently he warmed up. He became critical as to the setting of a ring, as to the stones in a bracelet. He even suggested once or twice that the colour of the stones was not suitable, and Peggy was eager to agree. The shopman groped in deeper darkness, since he had taken Peggy's complexion as his guiding star. However the bargains were made—that was the thing; three or four little boxes lay on the counter neatly packed.

'I will bring them round myself, madame, if you will favour me with the address.'

'We'll take them with us, please,' said Peggy.

There was a moment's pause; a polite but embarrassed smile appeared on the shopman's face; an altogether different explanation had for the moment suggested itself.

'We'll pay now and take them with us,' said Peggy.

'Oh, certainly, if you prefer, madame,' murmured the shopman gratefully. He engaged upon figures. Peggy jumped down from her chair and ranged about the shop, inspecting tiaras at impossible prices. She did not come back for three or four minutes. Airey was waiting for her, the small boxes in his hand.

She darted out of the shop and gave the cabman another direction. Airey followed her with a slowness that seemed

deliberate. She said nothing till they stopped again ; then she observed, just as she got out of the cab, ' This is the best place for pearls.'

Airey was a connoisseur of pearls, or so it seemed. He awoke to an extraordinary interest in them ; Peggy and he actually quarrelled over the relative merits of a couple of strings. The shopman arbitrated in favour of the more highly priced ; it had been Airey's choice, and he was ungracefully exultant.

' I don't like shopping with you,' declared Peggy pettishly.

' Anything for a quiet life !' sighed Airey. ' We'll have them both.'

A quick suspicion shot into her eyes.

' No, no, no,' she whispered imperatively.

' Why not ?'

' It would just spoil it all. Don't spoil it, Airey !'

He yielded. Here again the shopman had several theories, but no conviction as to the situation.

' Now we might lunch,' Peggy suggested. ' It's very tiring work, isn't it ?'

At lunch Airey was positively cantankerous. Nothing in the *table d'hôte* meal satisfied him ; the place had to be ransacked for recondite dainties. As for wine, he tried three brands before he would drink, and then did not pretend to be satisfied. The cigar he lit afterwards was an ostentatious gold-wrapped monster. ' We procure them especially for the Baron von Plutopluter,' the waiter informed him significantly.

' I'll put half a dozen in my pocket,' said Airey.

Peggy eyed the cigar apprehensively.

' Will that take very long ?' she asked. ' We've lots more to do, you know.'

' What more is there to do ?' he inquired amiably.

' Well, there's a good deal left still, you know,' she murmured in a rather embarrassed way.

' By Jove, so there is,' he agreed. ' But I don't quite see—'

Certainly Peggy was a little troubled ; her confidence seemed to fail her rather ; she appeared to contemplate a new and difficult enterprise.

' There isn't a bit too much if—if we do the proper thing,' she said. She looked at him—it might be said she looked over him—with a significant gaze. He glanced down at his coat :—

'Oh, nonsense! There's no fun in that,' he objected.

'It's quite half the whole thing,' she insisted.

There were signs of rebellion about him; he fussed and fidgeted, hardly doing justice to the Baron von Plutopluter's taste in cigars.

'I shall look such an ass,' he grumbled at last.

'You shall be quite moderate,' she pleaded speciously, but insincerely. She was relieved at the form of his objection; she had feared worse. His brow, too, cleared a little.

'Is there really any philosophy in it, Peggy?' he asked in a humorous puzzle.

'You liked it. You know you enjoyed it this morning.'

'That was for—well, I hope for somebody else.'

'Do try it—just this once,' she implored.

He abandoned himself to her persuasion; had not that been his bargain for the day? The hansom was called into service again. First to Panting's—where Airey's coat gave a shock such as the establishment had not experienced for many a day—then to other high-class shops. Into some of these Peggy did not accompany him. She would point to a note and say, 'Not more than half the change out of that,' or 'No change at all out of that.' When Airey came out she watched eagerly to see how profound would be the shopman's bow, how urgent his entreaty that he might be honoured by further favours. It is said that the rumour of a new millionaire ran through the London of trade that day.

'Are you liking it, Airey?' She was nearly at an end of her invention when she put the question.

He would give her no answer. 'Have you anywhere else you want to go?'

She thought hard. He turned to her smiling:—

'Positively I will not become the owner of a grand piano.'

A brilliant idea flashed on her—obvious as soon as discovered, like all brilliant ideas:

'Why, you'll have nothing decent to carry them in when you go visiting!'

A sudden sense of ludicrousness overcame Airey; he lay back in the cab and laughed. Was the idea of visiting so ludicrous? Or was it the whole thing? And Peggy's anxious seriousness alternating with fits of triumphant vivacity? All through the visit to the trunk-maker's Airey laughed.

'I can't think of anything else—though there's a note left,' she said with an air of vexed perplexity.

'You're absolutely gravelled, are you?' he asked. 'No, no, not the piano!'

'I'm finished,' she acknowledged sorrowfully. She turned to him with an outburst of gleefulness. 'Hasn't it been a wonderful day? Haven't we squandered, Airey?'

'We've certainly done ourselves very well,' said he.

The cabman begged directions through the roof.

'I don't know,' murmured Peggy in smiling despair. 'Yes, yes,' she called, 'back to Danes Inn! Tea and bread-and-butter, Airey!'

He took the key of his chambers from his pocket. 'You go and make tea. I'll be after you directly.'

'Have you thought of anything else?' she cried with a merry smile.

'I want to walk home and think about it,' said Airey. 'I sha'n't be long. Good-bye.' He recollected a trifle. 'Here's some money for the cab.'

'All that?' asked Peggy.

'He's sure we're mad already. Don't let's disturb his convictions,' Airey argued.

She gave no order to the man for a moment; she sat and watched Airey stroll off down Regent Street, his hands in his pockets (he never would carry a stick) and his head bent a little forward, as his custom was. 'What is he thinking?' she asked herself. What would he think when he realised the freak into which she had led him? He might turn very bitter—not with her but with himself. The enjoyment into which he had been betrayed might now, in a reaction of feeling, seem the merest folly. How should she argue that it had not been? What would any sober judgment on it say? Peggy drove back to Danes Inn in an anxious and depressed state. Yet ever and again the humours of the expedition broke in on her memory, and she smiled again. She chinked the two sovereigns he had given her in her hand. What was the upshot of the day? When she paid the cabman she exchanged smiles with him; that gave her some little comfort.

Danes Inn was comforting too. She hastened to make tea; everything was to be as in old days; to add to the illusion, she herself, having been too excited to eat lunch, was now genuinely hungry. She began to cut bread-and-butter. The loaf was stale!

Why, that was like old days too; she used to grumble at that, and Airey always seemed distressed; he used to pledge himself to have new loaves, but they did not always come. Now she saw why. She cut the bread with a liberal and energetic hand; but as she cut—nothing could be more absurd or incongruous—tears came into her eyes. 'He never grudged me enough, anyhow,' she murmured, buttering busily.

Surely, surely, what she had done should turn to good? Must it stand only as a fit of madness, to be looked back on with shame or spoken of with bitter ridicule? It was open enough to all this. Her heart still declared that it was open to something else too. The sun shot a ray in at the big dingy window, and lit up her face and hair. Her task was finished; she threw herself into her usual chair and waited. When he came she would know. He would have thought it over. His step was on the stair; she had left the door unlatched for him; she sat and waited, shutting her eyes before the brightness of that intruding ray.

An apprehension seized her—the fear of a task which she delayed. The step might not be Airey's; it might be Tommy Trent's. She might never be ready with her apology to Tommy, but at any rate she was not ready yet. No, surely it could not be Tommy! Why should he happen to come now? It was much more likely to be Airey.

The expected happened; after all it sometimes does. Airey it was; the idea that it was Tommy had served only to increase Peggy's sense of the generally critical character of the situation. She had taken such risks with everybody—perhaps she must say such liberties.

'Tea's ready,' she called to Airey the moment he appeared.

He took no sort of notice of that. His face, grave, as a rule, and strong, heretofore careworn too, had put on a strange boyish gaiety. He came up behind her chair. She tried to rise. He pressed her down, his hands on her shoulders.

'Sit still,' he commanded. 'Lean your head forward. You've got a plaguery lot of hair, Peggy!'

'What are you doing?' she demanded fiercely.

'You've ordered me about all day. Sit still.'

She felt his fingers on her neck; then she felt, too, the touch of little things smooth and cold. A little clasp clicked home. Airey Newton sprang back. Peggy was on her feet in a moment.

'You've done that after all?' she cried indignantly.

'You were at the end of your ideas. That's mine—and it balanced the thing out to the last farthing!'

'I told you it would spoil it all!' Her reproach was bitter, as she touched the string of pearls.

'No, Peggy,' he said. 'It only spoils it if it was a prank, an experiment, a test of your ingenuity, young woman. But it doesn't spoil it if it was something else.'

'What else?' she asked softly, sinking back again into her chair and fingering his present with a touch so gentle as to seem almost reverent. 'What else, Airey dear?'

'It came on me as I walked away from the shop—not while I was going there. I was rather unhappy till I got there. But as I walked home—with that thing—it seemed to come on me.' He was standing before her with the happy look of a man to whom happiness is something strange and new. "That's it," I thought to myself, "though how the deuce that chit found it out——!" It would be bad, Peggy, if a man who had worshipped an idol kicked it every day after he was converted. It would be vicious and unbecoming. But he should kick it once in token of emancipation. If a man had loved an unworthy woman (supposing there are any), he should be most courteous to her always, shouldn't he?'

'As a rule,' smiled Peggy.

'As a rule, yes,' he caught up eagerly. 'But shouldn't she have the truth once? She'd have been a superstition too, and for once the truth should be told. Well, all that came to me. And that's the philosophy of it. Though how you found it out——! Well, no matter. So it's not a mere freak. Was it a mere test of your ingenuity, young friend?'

'I just had to try it,' said Peggy Ryle, bewildered, delighted, bordering on tears.

'So will you wear the pearls?' He paused, then laughed. 'Yes, and eat your bread-and-butter.' He came up to her, holding out his hands. 'The chains are loose, Peggy, the chains are loose.' He seized his pipe and began to fill it, motioning her again towards the tea-table. To humour him she went to it and took up a slice of bread-and-butter.

'A stale loaf, Airey!' she whispered—and seemed to choke before she tasted it in an anticipated struggle with its obstinate substance.

He smiled in understanding. 'How men go wrong—and women! Look at me, look at Fricker, yes, look at—her! We none

of us knew the way. Fricker won't learn. She has—perhaps! I have, I think.' He moved towards her. 'And you've done it, Peggy.'

'No, no,' she cried. 'Oh, how can you be so wrong as that?'

'What?' He stood still in surprise. 'Didn't you suggest it all? Didn't you take me? Wasn't it for you that I did it?'

'Oh, you're so blind!' she cried scornfully. 'Perhaps I suggested it, perhaps I went with you! What does that matter?'

'Well, Peggy?' he said in his old indulgent pleasant way.

'Oh, I'm glad only one thing's changed in you!' she burst out.

'Well, Peggy?' he persisted.

'Were you thinking of me?' she demanded contemptuously. 'Were you kicking your idol for me? Were you buying for me? What made it harder to buy after lunch than before? Was that the difference between buying for yourself and for me?' Her scorn grew with every question. 'What have I done that you should give me this?' She plucked fretfully at the offending string of pearls.

'Never mind that. It was only to use up the change—if you like. What do you mean by the rest of it?'

'What do I mean?' cried Peggy. 'I mean that if you've done her a service, she's done you more. If you've given her back her self-respect, what hasn't she done for you? Are you going to her as her saviour? Oh, I know you won't talk about it! But is that in your mind? Go to her as yours too! Be honest, Airey! Whose face was in your mind through the drive to-day? If you ever thought of telling it all, who were you going to tell it to? If you wanted to be free, for whom did you want your freedom? I! What had I to do with it? If I could seem to speak with her voice, it was all I could do. And you've been thinking that she's done nothing for you. Oh, the injustice of it!' She put up her hand and laid it on his, which now rested on the back of her chair. 'Don't you see, Airey, don't you see?'

He smoked his pipe steadily, but as yet he gave her no assent.

'It's cost me nothing—or not much,' Peggy went on. 'I broke two promises——'

'Two?' he interrupted quickly.

'Yes, one you know—to Tommy.' He nodded. 'The other to her—I promised to tell no one she was ruined. But that's not much. It seems to me as if all that she's gone through, all she's lost, all she's suffered—yes, if you like, all the wrong things she's

done—had somehow all been for you. She was the only woman who could have made the change in you. Nobody else could have driven out the idol, Airey. You talk of me. You've known me for years. Did I ever drive it out? No, she had to do it. And before she could, she had to be ruined, she had to be in the dust, perhaps she had to be cruel or unjust to others. I can't work out the philosophy of it, but that's how it's happened.' She paused, only to break out vehemently again: 'You spoil it with your talk of me; you spoil it with the necklace!' With a sudden movement she raised her hands, unclasped the pearls from about her neck, and threw them on the table. 'Everything for her, Airey,' she begged, 'everything for her!'

His eyes followed the pearls, and he smiled. 'But what about all the things for me?'

'Aren't they for her too? Aren't you for her? Wouldn't you go to her as fine as you could?'

'What a woman—what a very woman you are!' he chuckled softly.

'No, that's all right,' she insisted eagerly. 'Would she be happy if you lavished things on her and were still wretched if you had anything for yourself?' She was full of her subject; she sprang up and faced him. 'Not this time to the poor, because they can't repay! Not this time to the fire, because it would give you no profit! You must love this—it's a great investment!'

He sat down in the chair she had left empty and played with the pearls that lay on the table.

'Yes, you're right,' he said at last. 'She was the beginning of it. It was she who—but shall I tell that to her?'

'Yes, tell it to her, to her only,' urged Peggy Ryle.

'Give me your hands, Peggy. I want to tell something to you.'

'No, no, there's nothing to tell me—nothing!'

'If the philosophy is great and true, is there to be no credit for the teacher?'

'Did I?' murmured Peggy, 'did I?' She went on in a hurried whisper: 'If that's at all true, perhaps Tommy Trent will forgive me for breaking my word.'

'If Fricker fell, and I have fallen, who is Tommy Trent?'

She moved away with a laugh, hunted for a cigarette—the box was hidden by papers—found it, and lit it. She saw Airey take up the pearls, go to the safe, open it, and lock them in.

'Never!' she cried in gay but determined protest.

'Yes, some day,' said he quietly, as he went back to his seat.

They sat together in silence till Peggy had finished her cigarette and thrown it away.

'If all goes well,' he said softly, more as though he spoke to himself than to her, 'I shall have something to work for now. I can fancy work will be very pleasant now, if things go well, Peggy.'

She rose and crossed over to him.

'I must run away,' she said softly. She leant down towards him. 'Is it a great change?' she asked.

'Tremendous—as tremendous as its philosophy.' He was serious under the banter. She was encouraged to her last venture, which he might have laughed back into retreat.

'It isn't really any change to me,' she told him in a voice that trembled a little. 'You've always been all right to me. This has always been a refuge and a hospitable home to me. If it had all failed, I should have loved you still, Airey my friend.'

Airey was silent again for an instant.

'Thank God, I think I can believe you in that,' he said at last.

She waited a moment longer, caressing his hand gently.

'And you'll go soon?' she whispered. 'You'll go to her soon?'

'This very night, my dear,' said Airey Newton.

Peggy stood upright. Again the sun's rays caught her eyes and hair, and flashed on her hands as she stretched them out in an ample luxury of joy.

'Oh, what a world it is, if you treat it properly, Airey!' she cried.

But she also had made her discovery. It was with plain amusement and a little laugh, still half-incredulous, that she added: 'And after all there may be some good in saving money too!'

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LAST KICK.

It was no wonder that Trix Trevalla was holding up her head again. Her neck was freed from a triple load. Mervyn was gone, and gone, she had warrant for believing, if not in contentment, yet in some degree of charity. Beaufort Chance, that terror of

hers, whose coarse rebukes made justice seem base cruelty, was gone too—and Trix was still unregenerate enough not to care a jot with what feelings. His fate seemed so exquisitely appropriate to him as to exclude penitence in her. Lastly, Fricker was gone, and with him the damning sense of folly, of being a silly dupe, which had weighed more sorely than anything else on a spirit full of pride. Never a doubt had she about Fricker's letter. He had indeed been honourable in his dealing with Peggy Ryle; he had left Trix to think that in surrendering the shares to him she fell in with a business proposal which he was interested in making, and that she gave at least as good as she received. It needed very little more to make her believe that she was conferring a favour on him, and thereby cancelling the last item of the score that he once had against her. Surely, then, Peggy was both wise and merciful in arguing that she should not know the truth, but should still think that she was in debt to no man for her emancipation?

Let not Peggy's mercy be disputed, nor her wisdom either; for these points are immaterial. The fault that young lady did commit lay in a little oversight. It is well to decide that a secret shall be kept; but it is prudent, as a preliminary thereto, to consider how many people already know it or are in a position where they may find it out. Since, though the best thing of all may be that it should never be told, the second best is often to tell it oneself—and the worst of all to leave the telling in the hands of an enemy. It is just possible that Peggy had grown a little too confident with all her successful generalship. At any rate this oversight of hers made not a little trouble.

'Dear Mr. Trent,—Come to me immediately, please. I have heard a most extraordinary story. I can hardly believe it, but I must see you at once. I shall be at home from six to seven and later.

'Yours truly,

'TRIX TREVALLA.'

'Now what's the meaning of that?' asked Tommy, smoothing his hat and setting out again without so much as sitting down for a pipe after he got back from the City. 'Has Peggy been up to mischief again?' He frowned; he had not forgiven Peggy. It is not safe to discourage a standard which puts the keeping of promises very high and counts any argument which tends the

other way in a particular case as dangerous casuistry. Tommy's temperament was dead against casuistry; perhaps, to be candid, his especial gifts of intellect constituted no temptation to the art.

Trix received him with chilling haughtiness. Evidently something was wrong. And the wrong thing was to be visited on the first chance-comer—just like a woman, thought Tommy, hasty in his inference and doubtless unjust in his psychology. In a few moments he found that he was considered by no means a chance-comer in this affair; nor had he been sent for merely as an adviser. Before Trix really opened the case at all, he had discovered that in some inexplicable way he was a culprit; the tones in which she bade him sit down were enough to show any intelligent man as much.

Trix might be high and mighty, but the assumption of this manner hid a very sore heart. If what she was now told were true, the last and greatest burden had not been taken away, and still she was shamed. But this inner mind could not be guessed from her demeanour.

'We've been good friends, Mr. Trent,' she began, 'and I have to thank you for much kindness——'

'Not at all. That's all right, really, Mrs. Trevalla.'

'But I'm forced to ask you,' she continued with over-riding imperturbability, 'by what right you concern yourself in my affairs.'

Tommy had a temper, and rather a quick one. He had been a good deal vexed lately too. In his heart he thought that rather too much fuss had been occasioned by and about Mrs. Trevalla; this was, perhaps, one of the limitations of sympathy to which lovers are somewhat subject.

'I don't,' he answered rather curtly.

'Oh, I suppose you're in the plot to deceive me!' she flashed out.

If he were, it was very indirectly, and purely as a business man. He had been asked whether the law could reach Fricker, and had been obliged to answer that it could not. He had been told subsequently to raise money on certain securities. That was his whole connection with the matter.

'But don't you think you were taking a liberty—an enormous liberty? You'll say it was kindness. Well, I don't dispute your motive, but it was presumption too.' Trix's disappointment was lashing her into a revenging fury. 'What right had you to turn

me into a beggar, to make me take your money, to think I'd live on your charity?' She flung the question at him with a splendid scorn.

Tommy wrinkled his brow in hopeless perplexity.

'On my honour, I don't know what you're talking about,' he declared. 'My charity? I've never offered you charity, Mrs. Trevalla.'

'You brazen it out?' she cried.

'I don't know about brazening,' said Tommy with a wry smile. 'I say it's all nonsense, if that's what you mean. Somebody's been——' He pulled himself up on the edge of an expression not befitting the seriousness of the occasion. 'Somebody's been telling you a cock-and-bull story.'

'What other explanation is there?'

'I might possibly discover one if you'd begin at the beginning,' suggested Tommy with hostile blandness.

'I will begin at the beginning, as you call it,' said Trix with a contempt for his terminology that seemed hardly warranted. She took a letter from her pocket. 'This is from Mr. Beaufort Chance.'

'That fellow!' ejaculated Tommy.

'Yes, that fellow, Mr. Trent. Mr. Fricker's friend, his partner. Listen to this.' She sought a passage a little way down the first page. "Not so clever as you think!" she read. "Glowing Stars were as pure a fraud as ever you thought them. But any story's good enough for you, and you believed Fricker took them back. So he did—for a matter of three thousand pounds. And he could have had four if he liked. That's what your cleverness is worth." Trix's voice faltered. She got it under control and went on with flushed cheeks, the letter shaking in her hand. "Who paid the money? Ask Peggy Ryle. Has Peggy Ryle got thousands to throw about? Which of your charming new friends has? Ask Miss Peggy who'd give four thousand for her smiles! If she doesn't know, I should think you might inquire of Tommy Trent." Trix stopped. 'There's some more about—about me, but it doesn't matter,' she ended.

Tommy Trent pulled his moustache. Here was a very awkward situation. Beaufort Chance's last kick was a nasty one. Why couldn't Fricker have held his tongue, instead of indulging his partner with such entertaining confidences?

'Well, what have you to say to that?' His puzzled face and

obvious confusion seemed to give her the answer. With something like a sob she cried, 'Ah, you daren't deny it!'

It was difficult for Tommy. It seemed simple indeed to deny that he had given Peggy any money; he might strain his conscience and declare that he knew nothing of any money being given. What would happen? Of a certainty Peggy Ryle could not dispose of thousands. He foresaw how Trix would track out the truth by her persistent and indignant questions. The truth would implicate his friend Airey Newton, and he himself would stand guilty of just such a crime as that for which he held Peggy so much to blame. His thoughts of Beaufort Chance were deep and dark.

'I can't explain it,' he stammered at length. 'All I know is——'

'I want the truth! Can I never have the truth?' cried Trix. 'Even a letter like that I'm glad of, if it tells me the truth. And I thought——' The bitterness of being deluded was heavy on her again. She attacked Tommy fiercely. 'On your honour do you know nothing about it? On your honour did Peggy pay Mr. Fricker money? On your honour did you give it her?'

The single word 'Woman!' would have summed up Tommy's most intimate feelings. It was, however, too brief for diplomacy, or for a man who wished to keep possession of the floor and exclude further attacks from an opponent in an overpowering superiority.

'What I've always noticed,' he began in a deliberate tone, 'about women is that if they write you the sort of note that looks as if you were the only friend they had on earth, or the only fellow whose advice would save 'em from ruin, and you come on that understanding—well, as soon as they get you there, they proceed to drop on you like a thousand of bricks.'

The simile was superficially inappropriate to Trix's trim tense figure; it had a deeper truth, though.

'If you'd answer my questions——' she began in an ominous and deceptive calm.

'Which of them?' cried Tommy in mad exasperation.

'Take them in any order you please,' she conceded graciously.

Tommy's back was against the wall; he fought desperately for his own honour, desperately for his friends' secrets. One of the friends had betrayed his. She was a girl. *Cadit questio.*

'If I had supposed that this was going to be a business interview——'

'And about your business, it seems, though I thought it was mine! Am I living on your charity?'

'No!' he thundered out, greeting the simple question and the possible denial. 'I've never paid a shilling for you.' His tone implied that he was content, moreover, to leave that state of affairs as it was.

'Then on whose?' asked Trix. Her voice became pathetic; her attitude was imploring now. She blamed herself for this, thinking it lost her all command. How profoundly wrong she was Tommy's increased distress witnessed very plainly.

'I say, now, let's discuss it calmly. Now just suppose—just take the hypothesis——'

Trix turned from him with a quick jerk of her head. The baize door outside had swung to and fro. Tommy heard it too; his eye brightened; there was no intruder whom he would not have welcomed, from the tax-collector to the bull of Bashan; he would have preferred the latter as being presumably the more violent.

'There, somebody's coming! I told you it was no place to discuss things of this kind, Mrs. Trevalla.'

'Of all cowardly creatures, men are——' began Trix.

A low gently crooned song reached them from the passage. The words were not very distinct—Peggy sang to please herself, not to inform the world—but the air was soothing and the tones tender. Yet neither of them seemed moved to artistic enjoyment.

'Peggy, by Jove!' whispered Tommy in a fearful voice.

'Now we can have the truth,' said Trix. She spoke almost like a virago, but when she sat at the table, her chin between her hands, she turned on Tommy such a pitiful harassed face that he could have cried with her.

In came Peggy; she had been to one or two places since Danes Inn, but the glory and gaiety of her visit there hung about her still. She entered gallantly. Then she saw Tommy—and Tommy only at first.

'Oh!' she exclaimed. 'Are you waiting for me?'

Her joy fled; that was strange, since it was Tommy. But there he sat, and sat frowning. It was the day of reckoning!

'I've—I've been meaning to come and see you,' Peggy went on hastily, 'and—and explain.'

'I must ask you to explain to me first, Peggy.'

This from a most forbidding majestic Trix, hitherto unperceived. She had summoned her forces again; the pleading pitifulness was gone from her face. Tommy reproached himself for a sneak and a coward, but for the life of him he could not help thinking, 'Now they can fight it out together!'

At first Peggy was relieved; a *tête-à-tête* was avoided. She did not dream that her secret was found out. Who would have thought of Fricker's taste for a good story or of that last kick of malice in Beaufort Chance?

'Oh, there you are too, Trix! So glad to find you. I've only run in for just a minute to change my frock before I go out to dinner with the——'

'It's only a quarter to seven. I want to ask you a question first.'

Trix's chilliness was again most pronounced and unmistakable. Peggy glanced at Tommy; a sullen and wilfully uninforming shrug of the shoulders was all that she got. Peggy had enjoyed the day very much; she was young enough to expect the evening to be like it; she protested vigorously against this sort of atmosphere.

'What's the matter with you both?' she cried.

Trix came straight to the point this time. She would have doubted Beaufort if he had brought gifts in his hand; she did not doubt him when he came with a knife.

'Whose money did you give Mr. Fricker to buy me off?' she asked. She held out her letter to Peggy.

Without a word, beyond a word, Peggy took it and read. Yes, there it was. No honour among thieves! None between her and Fricker! Stay, he had said he would not tell Trix; he had never said or written that he would not tell his partner Beaufort Chance. The letter of the bond! And he had professed to disapprove of Shylock! All that she had ever said about his honourable dealing, all that handsome testimonial of hers, Peggy took back on the spot. Thus did the whole of the beautiful scheme go awry!

'Trix dearest——' she began.

'My question, please,' said Trix Trevalla. But she had not the control to stop there. 'All of you, all of you!' she broke out passionately. 'Even you, Peggy! Have I no friend left—nobody who'll treat me openly, not play with me as if I were a child, and a silly child? What can I believe? Oh, it's too hard for me!' Again her face sank between her hands; again was the awakening very bitter to her.

They sat silent. Both were loyal; both felt as though they were found out in iniquity.

'You did it?' asked Trix in a dull voice, looking across at Peggy.

There was no way out of that. But where was the exultation of the achievement, where the glory?

'Forgive me, dear, forgive me,' Peggy murmured, almost with a sob.

'Your own money?'

'Mine!' echoed Peggy, between a sob and a laugh now.

'Whose?' Trix asked. There was no answer. She turned on Tommy. 'Whose?' she demanded again.

They would not answer. It was *peine forte et dure*; they were crushed, but they made no answer. Trix rose from her chair. Her manner was tragic, and no pretence went to give that impression.

'I—I'm not equal to it,' she declared. 'It drives me mad. But I have one friend still. I'll go to him. He'll find out the truth for me and tell it me. He'll make you take back your money and give me back my shares.'

Irresistibly the man of business found voice in Tommy Trent. An appeal to instinct beats everything.

'Do you really suppose,' he asked, 'that old Fricker will disgorge three thousand pounds?'

'That's it!' cried Trix. 'Look what that makes of me! And I thought——'

'The money's past praying for now, anyhow,' said Tommy, in a sort of gloomy satisfaction. There is, as often observed, a comfort in knowing the worst.

'I'll go to him,' said Trix. 'I can trust him. He wouldn't betray me behind my back. He'll tell me the truth as—as I told it to him. Yes, I'll go to Mr. Newton.'

It was odd, but neither of them had anticipated the name. It struck on them with all the unexpectedness of farce. On a moment's reflection it had the proper inevitability of tragedy. Tommy was blankly aghast; he could make nothing of it. In all its mingled effect, the poignancy of its emotion, the ludicrousness of its coincidences, the situation was more than Peggy Ryle could bear. She fell to laughing feebly, laughing though miserable at heart.

'Yes, I'll go to Airey Newton. He won't laugh at me, and

he'll let me have the truth.' She turned on them again. 'I've treated some people badly; I've never treated you badly,' she cried. 'Why should you play tricks on me? Why should you laugh? And I was ready to turn from all the world to you! But now—yes, I'll go to Airey Newton.'

Fortune had not done yet; she had another effect in store. Yet she used no far-fetched materials—only a man's desire to see the woman whom he had come to love. There was nothing extraordinary about this. The wonder would have been had he taken an hour longer in coming.

Peggy heard the step on the stairs; the others heard it a second later. Again Tommy brightened up in the hope of a respite—ah, let it be a stranger, someone outside all secrets, whose presence would drive them underground! Trix's denunciations were stayed. Did she know the step? Peggy knew it. 'You'll go to her soon?' 'This very night, my dear.' The snatch of talk came back to her in blazing vividness.

The baize door swung to and fro. 'All right, Mrs. Welling; I'll knock,' came in well-known tones.

'Why, it is Mr. Newton!' cried Trix, turning a glance of satisfied anger on her pair of miserable culprits.

Tommy was paralysed. Peggy rose and retreated into a corner of the room. A chair was in her way; she caught hold of it and held it in front of her, seeming to make it a barricade. She was very upset still, but traitorous laughter played about the corners of her mouth—it reconnoitred, seeking to make its position good. Aggressive satisfaction breathed from Trix Trevalla as she waited for the opening of the door. Airey put his head inside.

'Mrs. Welling told me I should find you,' he began; for Trix's was the first figure that he saw.

'You find us all, old fellow,' interrupted Tommy Trent, with malicious and bitter jocularities.

At this information Airey's face did not glow with pleasure. Friends are friends, but sometimes their appropriate place is elsewhere. He carried it off well though, exclaiming:

'What, you? And Peggy too?'

Trix had no idea of allowing wandering or diversions.

'I was just coming round to Danes Inn, Mr. Newton,' she said, in a voice resolute but trembling.

'To Danes Inn?' The listeners detected a thrill of pleasure in his voice.

'Yes, to see you. I want your help. I want you to tell me something. Peggy here—' she pointed a scornful finger at Peggy entrenched in the corner behind her chair, and looking as though she thought that personal violence was not out of the possible range of events—'Peggy here has been kind—what she calls kind, I suppose—to me. She's been to Mr. Fricker and paid him a lot of money to get me out of Glowing Stars—to persuade him to let me out of them. You told me there was some hope of them. You were wrong. There was none. But Peggy went and bought me out. Mr. Chance has written and told me so.'

Airey had never got further than the threshold. He stood there listening.

Trix went on in a level hard voice. 'He thinks Mr. Trent found the money. It was three thousand pounds—it might have been four. I don't know why Mr. Fricker only took three when he might have had four.'

For an instant Airey glanced at Peggy's face.

'But whether it was three or four, it couldn't have been Peggy's own money. I've asked Peggy whose it was. I've asked Mr. Trent whether it was his. I can't get any answer out of either of them. They both seem to think there's no need to answer me. They both seem to think that I've been such a—such a—Oh, what shall I do?' She dropped suddenly into a chair and hid her face in her hands.

At last Airey Newton advanced slowly towards her.

'Come, come, Mrs. Trevalla,' he began.

Trix raised her face to his. 'So, as I had no other friend—no other friend I could trust—and they wouldn't help me, I was coming to you. You won't forsake me? You'll tell me the truth?' Her voice rose strong again for a minute. 'This is terribly hard to bear,' she said, 'because I'd come to think it was all right, and that I hadn't been a wretched dupe. And now I have! And my own dear friends have done it too! First my enemies, then my friends!'

Tommy Trent cleared his throat, and looked shamefully indifferent; but for no apparent reason he stood up. Peggy sallied suddenly from her entrenchments, ran to Trix, and fell on her knees beside her.

'Trix, dear Trix!' she murmured.

'Yes, I daresay you loved me, but it's too hard, Peggy.' Trix's voice was hard and unforgiving still.

Was the position desperate? So far as Fortune's caprice went, so it seemed. Among the three the secret was gone beyond recall. Not falsehood the most thorough nor pretence the most artistic could save it. The fine scheme of keeping Trix in the dark now and telling her at some future moment—some future moment of idyllic peace—was hopelessly gone. Now in the stress of the thing, in the face of the turmoil of her spirit, she must be told. It was from this that Tommy Trent had shrunk—from this no less than from the injury to his plighted word. At the idea of this Peggy had cowered even more than from any superstitious awe of the same obligation binding her.

But Airey Newton did not appear frightened nor at a loss. His air was gentle but quite decided, his manner quiet but confident. A calm happiness seemed to be about him. There was subtle amusement in his glance at his two friends; the same thing was not absent from his eyes when they turned to Trix, although it was dominated by something tenderer. Above all, he seemed to know what to do.

Tommy watched him with surprised admiration. The gladdest of smiles broke out suddenly on Peggy's face. She darted from Trix to him and stood by him, saying just 'Airey!'

He took her hand for a moment and patted it. 'It's all right,' said he.

Trix's drooping head was raised again; her eyes too were on him now.

'All right?' she echoed in wondering tones.

'Yes, we can put all this straight directly. But——'

There was the first hint of embarrassment in his manner.

'But what?' asked Trix.

He had no chance to answer her. 'Yes, yes!' burst from Peggy in triumphant understanding. She ran across to Tommy and caught him by the arm. 'There's only my room, but that must do for once,' she cried.

'What? What do you mean?' he inquired.

'Peggy's right,' said Airey, smiling. There was no doubt that he felt equal to the situation. He seemed a new man to Peggy, and her heart grew warm; even Tommy looked at him with altered eyes.

'The fact is, Tommy,' said Airey easily, 'I think I can explain this better to Mrs. Trevalla if you leave us alone.'

Trix's head was raised; her eyes leapt to meet his. She did

not yet understand—her idea of him was too deep-rooted. It was trust that her eyes spoke, not understanding.

‘Leave us alone,’ said Airey Newton.

Peggy beckoned to Tommy, and herself made towards the door. As she passed Airey, he smiled at her. ‘All right!’ he whispered again.

Then Peggy knew. She ran into the passage and thence to her room. Tommy followed, amazed and rather rueful.

‘We must wait here. You may smoke,’ said she kindly; but she added eagerly, ‘And so will I.’

‘But, I say, Peggy——’

‘Wasn’t it just splendid that he should come then?’

‘Capital for us! But he did it, you know!’ Tommy’s tone was awestruck.

‘Why, of course he did it, Tommy.’

‘Then, in my opinion, he’s in for a precious nasty quarter of an hour.’

Peggy plumped down on the bed, and her laugh rang out in mellow gentleness again.

‘Doesn’t it strike you that she might forgive him what she wouldn’t forgive us?’ she asked.

‘By Jove! Because she’s in love with him?’

‘Oh, I suppose that’s not a reason for forgiveness with everybody,’ murmured Peggy, smoking hard.

(To be continued.)

SIR EDWARD BERRY.¹

BY THE REV. W. H. FITCHETT, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF 'DEEDS THAT WON THE EMPIRE.'

'Here comes Berry. Now we shall have a fight!'

Nelson on the Eve of Trafalgar.

THAT sentence from Nelson's lips exactly expresses Berry's characteristics and reputation. He was not an administrator, a diplomatist, a tactician, a philosopher; he was, first and last, a fighting man. Fortune, with open hands, thrust fights upon him. They pursued him everywhere. He won his earliest promotion in a boarding exploit. He first becomes visible to history at large when clambering up the mizzen chains of the *San Nicolas* at St. Vincent, leading the attack in that memorable and heroic exploit in which one sorely battered English 74 captured, with cutlass and pistol, two Spanish first-rates in succession. Berry was the only man in the British fleet, except Collingwood, entitled to wear three medals as having commanded a ship in three general actions—the Nile, Trafalgar, and San Domingo. But he shared, in addition, well-nigh all the fighting of that period. He was with Howe on June 1, and with Hughes in the long procession of fights which that dogged, if somewhat slow-moving, sailor fought with Suffren in Indian waters.

Berry could never have commanded a fleet. His fame as a gallant fighter, indeed, suffered from the time he commanded a ship of his own. He could never have planned a great battle, for he lacked the tactician's brain. But if someone else only planned a clear, specific bit of fighting, no matter how desperate, Berry could carry out the plan with serene cheerfulness and exhaustless courage. He would lead the boarders, cutlass in hand, against any odds, with a light-hearted daring which made him the delight of the Jacks who followed him; and he would have fought his battery to the last cartridge and the last man with more than bulldog stubbornness. Perhaps there was a little touch of half-

¹ This study forms part of Dr. Fitchett's forthcoming work, *Nelson and his Captains: Sketches of Famous Seamen*.—[ED. CORNHILL].

affectionate contempt in the regard in which Berry was held by his superiors. For Berry fought much as a bulldog fights, with a sort of half-blind courage, magnificent in its fearlessness and persistency, but having in it very much more of muscles than of brain. One version indeed—an unstarched and unofficial version—of Nelson's words quoted at the beginning of this sketch is, 'Here comes that — fool Berry! Now we shall have a fight!'

But Berry was no fool. He was a fine seaman, and understood the practical part of his profession thoroughly. A vote of the fore-castle would probably have chosen him to command in any desperate cutting-out expedition on hand. But if Berry, instead of Troubridge, had commanded the half-drowned handful of sailors in the square at Santa Cruz, he and most of his men would probably have died at the foot of the citadel walls. Berry would never have brought them off with the ingenious and audacious coolness that Troubridge showed! And if Berry instead of Blackwood had commanded the *Penelope* in that long, tormenting night pursuit of the *Guillaume Tell*, the frigate would probably have sunk under the guns of the Frenchman. For Berry would certainly have closed with his great antagonist in mere blind, fighting anger; he could never have shown the wary and sustained skill of Blackwood, who kept clear of the huge Frenchman while tormenting him from midnight to day-break.

Berry, in a word, was a first-class fighting subordinate; and Nelson, who did not enjoy having a critic on his quarter-deck, who wanted a flag captain of the best fighting quality, but one who was content that his admiral should do all the thinking, chose Berry when he sailed in the *Vanguard* on the immortal cruise which was to end at the Nile.

Berry was of poor family, and began his sea life as a volunteer on the *Burford* of seventy guns. He spent four years in the East Indies on her, and won his commission as a lieutenant, cutlass in hand, in a desperate fight on the deck of a French ship of war which he had boarded. In 1796 he was appointed as lieutenant on the *Agamemnon*, and first came in contact with Nelson. He was then twenty-eight years of age, a model of physical energy and activity. His fire and zeal caught Nelson's eye at once, and he took Berry with him to the *Captain*; and while Nelson was on shore, toiling and fighting in the trenches in front of Porto Ferrajo, Berry was left in command of her. This was a stroke of singular good fortune for him, and won him the rank of com-

mander. While waiting for a ship, however, he remained as a supernumerary on board the *Captain*, and thus, by another stroke of good fortune, found himself an idler on Nelson's ship in the great fight at Cape St. Vincent.

When the call came for boarders to carry the great *San Nicolas* Berry found again the opportunity which exactly suited him, and which brought out his special gifts. No one could clamber up the tall sides of a Frenchman or a Spaniard with quicker foot or gayer heart than Berry. In the immortal memorandum in which Nelson himself tells the tale of the great exploit the figure of Berry appears illuminated as if by a flash of lightning. Nelson tells how he directed Captain Miller to put his helm a-starboard, and, with his shrill, high-pitched voice calling for boarders, gave the word to board just as the two great ships clashed together, the tall side of the Spaniard towering above the decks of the *Captain*. Says Nelson, 'The first man who jumped into the enemy's mizzen chains was Captain Berry. . . . He was supported from our spritsail yard, which hooked in the mizzen rigging.' Miller, a sailor of Berry's own fighting gifts, was in the act of following; 'but,' says Nelson, 'I directed him to remain.' A soldier of the 69th with the butt end of his musket smashed in the upper quarter gallery window of the Spaniard; and, writes Nelson, 'I jumped in myself, and was followed by others as fast as possible.'

Berry meanwhile had clambered up the high bulwarks of the Spaniard, and jumped down on to its well-like decks. A stream of boarders tumbling from the spritsail yard followed him, and Berry leading, they rushed the Spaniard's poop. When Nelson, having fought his way across the cabins and broken open the cabin doors, reached the quarter-deck, he found Berry in triumphant possession of the poop, and the Spanish flag fluttering down. The *San Josef* now opened a spluttering fire of muskets and pistols on the boarders visible on the forecastle and poop of the *San Nicolas*, and Nelson instantly gave the word to board her in turn. She could only be reached at the main chains; and Berry, with all his quickness of hand and foot and tingling fighting impulse, could hardly take the lead of his own admiral. He was decorously assisting Nelson into the main chains of the huge Spaniard when a Spanish officer thrust his head over the quarter-deck rail above them and announced that they surrendered.

Those few wild moments on the quarter-deck of the *San Nicolas* and in the main chains of the *San Josef* constituted a link betwixt Nelson and Berry that never quite broke. When next he commanded a squadron, Nelson promised Berry that he should be his flag captain; and so Berry found the great opportunity of his life on the quarter-deck of the *Vanguard* in Nelson's memorable pursuit of Brueys across the Mediterranean, and in the historic victory of Aboukir Bay.

Berry's one excursion into the realms of literature belongs to this period of his life. In the 'Naval Chronicle' of 1799 appears a long and curiously interesting narrative of both the pursuit and the battle, 'drawn up from the minutes of an officer of rank in the squadron.' The writer is Berry, and his narrative is really one of the best accounts of the doings of the fleet during those three memorable months betwixt the departure of the *Vanguard* from Gibraltar, on May 9, and the actual fighting in Aboukir Bay on August 1, to be found anywhere. It is a businesslike story; the tale of a great sea-chase, and of a sea-fight, told by a sailor and for sailors. It has no pretensions to literary charm, and yet it has a certain quality of luminousness and of graphic force not always found in more ambitious literature. The unconscious personal element in the story has sometimes an amusing effect.

Thus Berry tells, with simple-minded pride and delight, the story how Nelson, after the great storm of May 22, from which the *Vanguard* crept in a state of semi-wreck, determined to stick to his shattered flagship, and not to exchange it for, say, the *Orion* or the *Alexander*. With a sailor's natural bias in favour of his own ship, again, Berry discovers that the poor battered *Vanguard*, after all, 'sails and works as well as the other ships,' in spite of her stumpy jurmasts and patched canvas. Berry gives us the gossip of the *Vanguard's* quarter-deck, and records how, when Troubridge with the rest of the squadron had joined them, Nelson confided to him that 'he would now be a match for any hostile fleet in the Mediterranean, and his only desire was to encounter one.'

War had swept the sea clean, and the long voyage across the lonely seas, broken too seldom by a slanting white sail on the horizon, is reflected with curious clearness in Berry's narrative. Once they caught a glimpse of half a dozen topsails above the sea rim; their cut showed that they were Spanish merchant ships. They must be richly laden. Here was prize money in unknown

amounts under their lee, waiting to be taken. But Nelson's fiery soul scorned to turn aside from the pursuit of Brueys to capture a few stray galleons. Whether, indeed, the Jacks in the forecastle shared Nelson's scorn of mere prize money may be doubted. They must have contemplated with watering mouths those fat Spaniards, their topsails growing ever fainter, going off to leeward.

We get a glimpse from Berry's narrative of the discipline and methods which brought Nelson's ships into such unsurpassed fighting condition. The decks of all the ships, Berry says, were kept perfectly clear night and day. Every man was ready to start to his post at a moment's notice. The crews were daily exercised at the great guns and small arms. The fleet, in a word, was kept at the highest point of discipline and in instant readiness for battle. Nelson, in addition, throughout the whole of that memorable cruise turned the quarter-deck of the *Vanguard* into what can only be described as a perpetual 'school for captains.' Whenever the weather admitted he summoned the captains on board the flagship, where, says Berry, 'he would fully develop to them his own ideas of the different and best modes of attack, and such plans as he proposed to execute upon falling in with the enemy, whatever their position or situation might be by night or day.' 'There was no possible position in which they could be found that he did not take into his calculations, and for the most advantageous attack of which he had not digested and arranged the best possible plans. With the masterly ideas of their admiral, therefore, on the subject of naval tactics, every one of his captains was most thoroughly acquainted.' This explains why, when the moment of attack came—and came suddenly—signals were so little needed.

Nelson hoped to catch Brueys, with all his transports, in the open sea. If this happened, the fleet was to divide into three squadrons, under Troubridge, Saumarez, and Nelson himself. Two divisions were to attack the French men-of-war; the third was to devote itself solely to the destruction of the transports. It is interesting to reflect on what would have happened if Nelson had got loose amongst the French transports, with Napoleon himself on one of them. It would have been a pack of sea-wolves harrying a flock of very distressed sheep.

Berry himself seems, temporarily at least, to have become saturated with Nelson's ideas as a result of these perpetual lessons in tactics on the quarterdeck of the *Vanguard*. He sees things with Nelson's eyes; he gives us—no doubt second hand—little

fragments of Nelsonian wisdom. He records the admirable maxim, for example, that 'courage alone will not lead to conquest without the aid and direction of exact discipline and order.' This is certainly a bit of wisdom which did not grow on the soil of Berry's unassisted intellect. Berry, again, helps us to catch—at least for an instant—a glimpse of the Frenchmen in Aboukir Bay as Nelson's eye saw them. 'The admiral,' he says, 'viewed these with the eye of a seaman determined on attack; and it instantly struck his eager and penetrating mind that where there was room for an enemy's ship to swing, there was room for one of ours to anchor.' That sentence is the key to the tactics which won the Nile.

Only an actual eye-witness could have described 'the wave of joy' which ran through the crowded decks of the British ships when it was certain the Frenchmen were at last in sight; and only one who stood on the quarter-deck of the *Vanguard* could have known that 'the gladdest' man in the whole fleet was Nelson himself. 'Of the ardour and vigour' with which the British sailors toiled at their guns when the actual fighting began Berry again is able to speak as an eye-witness. Then, with a sailor's touch, Berry adds, 'The wind was at this time N.N.W., and blew what seamen call a topgallant breeze. It was necessary to take in the royals when we hauled upon the wind.' Berry adds a characteristic sea detail to the description of the actual onfall of the British ships: 'In standing in, our leading ships,' he writes, 'were unavoidably obliged to receive into their bows the whole fire of the broadsides of the French line. . . . At this time the necessary number of our men were employed aloft in furling sails, and on deck in hauling the braces &c. preparatory to our casting anchor.' Berry once more gives us, with a sailor's directness, the explanation of why the French fleet was missed by the pursuing British both on their way to Alexandria and on their return from Alexandria to Syracuse. 'The French,' he says, 'steered a direct course for Candia, by which they made an angular passage towards Alexandria, whilst we steered a direct course for that place without making Candia at all.' This plan shortened the distance, but it missed the French. On the return to Syracuse the British took the northern course from Alexandria, while the French took a southern course to it, and so missed each other again.

Berry played his part gallantly enough on the quarter-deck of the *Vanguard*. When Nelson—struck on the brow by a bit of

flying langridge from the *Spartiate*—was falling, his face covered with blood, it was Berry who caught him in his arms. 'I am killed,' said Nelson to Berry. 'Remember me to my wife!' Berry had now to fight the ship; as flag-captain, indeed, he had to direct the fleet, for the *Vanguard* was the only ship whose signals commanded obedience everywhere. Fortunately the ships needed no 'direction.' Each was busy pounding into submission its immediate enemy. In his despatch Nelson, who, under a generous impulse, ran easily into superlatives, writes: 'The support and assistance I received from Captain Berry cannot be sufficiently expressed. I was wounded in the head and obliged to be carried off the deck; but the service suffered no loss by that event. Captain Berry was fully equal to the important service then going on.' As his reward Berry was sent with despatches to England, and he carried with him, as a trophy to be presented to the King, the flag of the second in command of the French fleet. Brueys' flag had, of course, gone down with the *Orient*. Such a trophy, carried by the hands of one who had helped to win it, would have met with a great reception in London; but, alas! that flag is not to be found in any British collection. It was destined, by a very odd turn of events, to fall into French hands again.

Berry sailed for England in the *Leander* on August 15, and no doubt with the natural exultation and pride of a messenger who was carrying tidings so great, and a trophy so proud, to his country. On the 19th, when off Candia, the tall topsails of a great ship coming quickly up before a south-east breeze were visible. It was a French 74, the *Généreux*, one of the two line of battle ships which had escaped from the *Nile*. It was an odd meeting. A fugitive from the defeated fleet stumbles on a ship from the victorious fleet carrying the news and the trophies of victory to England. But it was a very unfortunate meeting for the *Leander*. The *Généreux* was twice as big as the *Leander*, carried eighty guns to her fifty, had more than double her weight of broadsides, and more than thrice her number of men. The French ship had 936 men, and the British ship had 282. It was a fight betwixt a man and a boy.

But Thompson, who commanded the *Leander*, was a fighter of high quality, and, with Berry beside him on the quarter-deck, it was certain that the *Leander* would be a very hard nut for even the *Généreux* to crack. Thompson at first made all sail to escape

his formidable antagonist, but the *Généreux* brought the wind up with her, and Thompson at last coolly shortened sail and waited for his foe. By nine o'clock the *Généreux* was abeam of the *Leander*, and both ships opened fire. The wind was falling; the two great hulls forged slowly ahead, wrapped in smoke and smiting each other with swift broadsides. The *Leander*, by half-past ten, was almost completely crippled, and the *Généreux* ran her on board, striking the *Leander* on the starboard bow and dropping alongside with a crash that smashed the lower deck ports of the British ship. Again and again at this stage of the fight the French tried to carry the *Leander* by boarding, but as often they were driven back by the marines and the small arms men. And while a hand-to-hand fight thus raged on the upper decks, the great guns on the lower decks of the two ships were thundering wrathfully at each other across an interval of only a few inches. A breath of wind now drove the *Généreux* ahead of the *Leander*, and that ship lay completely disabled, with her mizzenmast over her stern and her foretopmast over the larboard. The *Généreux* tacked and bore down again on the *Leander*, intending to end the fight at a blow; but the indomitable British ship with the aid of a spritsail was able to luff, in broken-winged fashion, under the stern of the Frenchman, and raked her whole length with every gun that could be brought to bear.

This unequal fight lasted for six and a half hours, but by that time the *Leander* had lost all power of movement. The *Généreux* took a position on its larboard bow and venomously raked its unfortunate antagonist. No stick was standing on the *Leander* save the bowsprit and the stumps of her fore and main masts. Her decks were strewn with the dead or wounded; half her guns were useless, owing to the wreckage of spars lying on them. Thompson and Berry held a brief consultation, and then a pike with a French jack at the end of it was thrust above the shattered bulwark; the *Leander* had surrendered. But the *Leander* had fought magnificently if disastrously. Her killed and wounded amounted to ninety-two, nearly one-third of her total crew; the killed and wounded on board the *Généreux* amounted to some 288. The *Leander*, in a word, disabled as many Frenchmen as the total number of her own crew amounted to. The *Généreux* was left without a boat that could float, and her boatswain, with one of her middies, had to swim to the *Leander* to take possession of the hard-won prize.

The French, with the memory of the Nile rankling in their blood, behaved very badly to their beaten foe. They plundered the ship; they rifled the pockets of their prisoners; they stole the very instruments from the English doctor. A cruel neglect was shown to the wounded. Berry remonstrated with one of the French officers, and reminded him how differently Nelson treated his prisoners. 'Ah!' was the Frenchman's reply, 'but the French are expert at plunder.' The truth is the Frenchmen felt they were avenging Aboukir Bay.

The English officers were released on parole at Corfu, but the seamen were kept prisoners. An attempt was made to persuade some of the English sailors to serve under the French flag, and the reply of one honest maintopman still survives in the traditions of the forecastle: 'No! you d——d French rascal,' was the answer; 'give us back our little ship, and we'll fight you again till we sink.'

Berry, being exchanged, reached London early in December, and was promptly knighted. Early in 1799 he joined the *Foudroyant*, Nelson's flagship, as captain. Nelson was on shore at Naples when there befell Berry perhaps the most exquisite piece of good fortune he could have desired. He fell in with his old captor, the *Généreux*, and captured her!

The *Généreux*, with a small squadron, was making an attempt to throw supplies into the long-besieged French garrison at Malta; and on the morning of February 18 Lord Keith's squadron intercepted the French ships. The *Généreux* might have escaped, but a British frigate, the *Success*, threw herself across the Frenchman's bows, hung there, and raked her with diligent broadsides. The *Généreux* presently shook off her tiny antagonist, but the *Foudroyant*, an 80-gun ship, was coming up with every stitch of canvas spread; and close behind her came another English 74, the *Northumberland*. And the *Généreux* was not prepared to play against such odds the desperate game the *Leander* had played against her. Berry had only fired his second gun when the *Généreux* struck her colours. Berry hugely enjoyed the interview with his former captors, but it may be doubted whether the pleasure of that interview was shared by the Frenchmen.

Twelve days later another stroke of happiness befell Berry. The only other French ship of the line that had escaped from the Nile, the *Guillaume Tell*, lay at anchor in Malta. On the night of the 30th she made a spirited attempt to escape the British

blockade. With magnificent skill and daring Blackwood, in the little *Penelope*, hung on the great Frenchman's quarter, and raked her for long hours till the day broke. Then the *Lion* came up, and waged an unequal fight with the Frenchman. Last of all, the bluff-bowed and lumbering *Foudroyant* arrived on the scene of action; arrived, indeed, in a sort of breathless hurry which well-nigh defeated its own end. 'We did not fire a shot till we were within hail,' Berry tells Nelson in the excited letter he wrote after the fight was over. There never was a more gallant and obstinate defence than that which the *Guillaume Tell* offered to her assailants. The *Foudroyant*, superior to her in weight of fire, lay broadside on to the Frenchman; the *Lion* hung on her starboard quarter; the *Penelope* raked her bows. Yet the *Guillaume Tell* fought her guns till every spar had gone by the board, and only surrendered long after nightfall, when she was reduced to the condition of a mere shot-torn hulk.

Berry had now practically reached the climax of his career. He hoisted his flag on board a famous ship, the *Agamemnon*, but he did nothing famous in it. When he was Nelson's flag-captain, and under the spell of Nelson's companionship, he was capable of great things; but when left to himself he somehow seemed to lose all his initiative and more than half his daring. He took part in the great fight of Trafalgar, and it might have been expected that so illustrious a ship as the *Agamemnon*, under Nelson's favourite captain, would have filled a great place in that greatest of sea battles. This, however, was by no means the case.

On the morning when the combined fleet of the enemy came out of Cadiz the *Agamemnon* had captured a stumpy and heavily-laden merchant brig, had its prize in tow, and was deliberately tugging it into the outstretched arms of the enemy's fleet! Blackwood, in the *Euryalus*, signalled that the enemy was in the north-east, but had to keep firing signal guns for an hour before the stolid *Agamemnon* took any notice. Blackwood's log runs: 'Made telegraph signals to the *Agamemnon* that thirty-four of the enemy were out, and to make all sail, and repeat signals between me and the admiral; and that the enemy's ships were much scattered; and directed Sir Edward Berry to fire every ten minutes with the preceding signal; but she still stood on south-east with a brig in tow, when we lost sight of her.' Berry, that is, was deliberately ignoring signals, and sailing away from the enemy. The *Agamemnon* resembled an ant that had captured

a beetle, and was dragging its booty, now in one direction and now in another, but determined not to give it up. It was not going to part with its precious beetle for any earthly consideration. To the great fight itself the *Agamemnon* made an absolutely microscopic contribution. The most expressive sentence in the *Agamemnon's* own log of the battle consists in the words 'engaging the enemy's ships as most convenient.' The killed and wounded on the British side amounted to 1,690; to that total the *Agamemnon* contributed exactly ten. Only one other ship in the British fleet—the *Polyphemus*—reported fewer casualties than the *Agamemnon*: it had six killed and wounded. Now, a British 74 that went through the fires of Trafalgar and had only ten of its crew hit must either have been very unfortunately placed or very inefficiently handled. If Nelson had been on the quarter-deck of the *Agamemnon*, with Berry as his flag-captain, it may be assumed with entire certainty that the record would have been very different.

Nelson, in a word, was the head, Berry the hand. And Berry without Nelson was a hand without a brain to direct it.

When, for example, the message came that the *Guillaume Tell* had broken out of Malta, and that the tiny *Penelope* was in pursuit—the flash of her guns visible in the darkness, but growing fainter every moment—Berry could not realise the situation, nor decide what to do. His angry commodore had to send a hurried and vehement message expressing his 'great surprise at the inactivity of the flagship of Lord Nelson' and his 'most positive orders' to slip her anchor and go in pursuit of the big Frenchman before Berry stirred. When somebody else told him what to do, then, indeed, Berry did it; and if it was, as in this case, to fight a visible Frenchman, he did it with energy and enjoyment. But he was slow-minded. A problem suddenly presented, unless somebody was on hand to interpret it, puzzled, or even paralysed, him. And war is made up of unexpected problems.

Codrington, it will be remembered, went into the fight at Trafalgar with a fine coolness. Not a gun was fired on board the *Orion* till its particular antagonist was chosen, and the *Orion* was almost touching its stern. Then one close and dreadful broadside sent the Frenchman's three masts tumbling and drove her to strike. But as the *Orion*, in disciplined and dreadful silence, moved slowly into the heart of the fight, Codrington gives us a glimpse of 'the *Agamemnon* far astern of us, blazing away

and wasting her ammunition!' That hasty, ineffective fire, planless and blind, gives the measure of Berry's leadership.

Berry was made a baronet; he commanded one of the royal yachts; he attained the rank of rear-admiral; he acquired, that is, a number of ornamental dignities, but he somehow lost both his professional efficiency and his fighting energy. He lived till 1831, but he outlived his faculties. He left no children. His baronetcy became extinct. Berry's career is thus a sort of unfulfilled prophecy. The man who at thirty years of age was the flag-captain of Nelson at the Nile, with seventeen years of war before him, ought to have left an imperishable mark upon history.

Berry's career is a *torso*, because he himself lacked the qualities, not merely of a great, but even of a second-class leader. He does not stand in the same rank with Troubridge, or Saumarez, or Ball. He had merely what may be called the ruder and more primitive qualities of the fighting man: indifference to danger, a joy in the rough and tumble of conflict, a fiery energy in merely physical strife. He was to Nelson what a cutlass is to a boarder—a weapon caught up at the moment of combat, and valued for its power to slay. If Berry was as brave as his own sword, he was, as far as the higher qualities of leadership were concerned, as unintellectual as a sword.

'CAST.'

BY HUGH CLIFFORD, C.M.G.

I.

THE recollection of my earliest impressions concerning him is still fresh in my mind. From the moment of our entry into the troubled land one name—the name of Simon Strange, of 'Túan Streng,' as the natives called him—had been dinned into our ears with insistent reiteration. We were bored to death by the constant repetition. There seemed to be, in all that wilderness, no soul capable of framing a single sentence in which reference to Simon Strange did not occupy a place. The Chiefs who paid us courtly visits of ceremony to assure us of their loyalty to the alien Power for which we stood—a 'loyalty,' by the way, which was something curiously like treachery to their own people, and which even the simplest-hearted among us viewed with acute suspicion—invariably introduced themselves as being numbered in the tale of those whom 'Túan Streng' valued and trusted and loved. This bare and unsupported statement was evidently regarded by them as an all-sufficing certificate of character, and as a sure key to our own respect, confidence, and affection.

At those excruciating interviews to which we were subjected by these local potentates, we groaned in spirit whenever Simon Strange, his opinions, customs, predilections, actions, words were quoted to us by our visitors. The Chiefs would sit glaring at us in funereal silence for hours at a time, occasionally punctuating the long embarrassing pauses by slow trickles of speech. They emitted their words as grudgingly as drops of water are squeezed from a dry sponge, but as surely as they found voice to speak so surely did they harp upon the one inevitable topic—Túan Streng. The village headmen who wandered into camp with long tangled tales upon their lips—the hopeless irrelevancies and the panic-born rumours which these worthy folk dignified by the name of 'information'—always called loudly upon 'Túan Streng' and upon Allah and His Prophet to witness that they did not lie, and wound up their most palpably incredible statements by declaring roundly

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that if only one or another of the above-mentioned authorities were in camp their precious news would find instant belief.

All the brown men, women, and children, who straggled in to us from the mysterious unknown forest country that girt us about, began by asking whether 'Tuan Streng' was with us, and expressed their disappointment with undisguised and unflattering frankness when they learned that they were expected to have dealings with our own unworthy selves. Not a few of them, when the absence of the popular hero was made known, declined absolutely to hold any intercourse with meaner folk than he, and retired incontinently into the wilderness which had spewed them forth. One hoary old ruffian, who had as his 'tail' a following of some of the most sinister-looking and elaborately armed cut-throats that I had ever seen, spat on the ground in the most unblushing fashion in token of his disgust when it was suggested to him that he should transfer his allegiance to us as the friends of the absentee. That was not to be thought of, he said. He and 'Tuan Streng' were brothers *dunia âkhirat*—through time and eternity—a relationship which, I confess, did not move me to envy the unknown Strange. The old fellow also mentioned that his 'brother' was not a mere common white man, but a person of distinction, who, moreover, stood possessed of various useful and unusual qualities entitling him to honour. For instance, he was invulnerable, could foretell events, and was in close league with the *Hantu Utan*—the Jungle Demon—a serviceable spirit, it would appear, by whose aid Strange was reputed to be able to cover vast distances on foot in inconceivably short spaces of time. Viewed as samples of local superstition these fragments of modern folk-lore might have a certain interest, but long ere this I, and the other youngsters with the punitive expedition, had learned to cherish a deadly hatred of Simon Strange, the man whom none of us had ever met, from out the shadow of whose haunting personality it yet seemed impossible to emerge.

And the thing that irked us most was that the leaders of our expedition appeared to have become the thralls of the prevailing possession. It had been understood amongst us that we had been hurried up into the district in which we then lay in order to relieve Strange's stockade, where, with a couple of white men and a handful of Indian soldiers, he had been offering a stubborn resistance to certain hostile tribes who had maintained a close investment of the position during several precarious weeks. Why

then, we asked, did we not push ahead quickly, and give the beggars the licking they were spoiling for? After the manner of our kind, we, the young and ardent members of the expedition, had long ago decided that our leaders were 'a pack of old women,' and this prolonged inaction proved to us the soundness of our immature judgment. We were obliged to keep our opinions more or less to ourselves, but none the less we asked questions. And the answers were always the same. 'We must wait for Simon Strange. Strange thinks that we had better not advance yet awhile. Strange thinks that the job can be done more thoroughly if we wait till he gets through to us. Simon Strange says that he can keep his end up all right till the cows come home, so there is nothing to be gained by hurrying matters for a bit. We must wait for Simon Strange, or at any rate until he gives us the *route*,' and much more to a like purpose.

Could anything be more unsatisfactory, galling or humiliating? Here we were, a big, well-equipped force, within 'shouting-distance' (as we termed it) of an insolently rebellious population of Asiatics, kicking our heels in dishonourable inactivity while we calmly awaited the coming of the very man to effect whose rescue we had gone upon the war-path! And here were our leaders—men grown old in native warfare, and childish in our irreverent estimation—hanging fire in this ignoble fashion in order that a mere political officer—a civilian, a *pékin*—might make his way across the danger-zone, and be so obliging, if you please, as to teach us military men how to manage our own particular *pidjin*! Can it be wondered at if young blood and hot heads waxed rebellious, if we grumbled furiously among ourselves, and cursed the unknown Simon by every god in the Mythologies?

Looking out upon the enemy's country from the hill-top upon which our camp was pitched, you could see absolutely nothing except the white-hot sky above—empty save for a solitary kite hanging almost motionless in the still air—and a wide expanse of forest, spread before and below us, like a great sea of blues and greens blurred and misty in the heat-haze. A big horseshoe range of mountains, their jungle-clad slopes an ethereal azure in the distance, encircled the plain, which here and there was intersected by bold dykes of rolling hill-spurs of a deeper tint, those nearest to us resembling giant cauliflowers, since upon their flanks the broken curves of the tree-tops were clearly visible. Now and again the intense sunlight flashed upon a half-hidden

reach of river, and at eventide in certain places thin columns of smoke arose marking the existence of villages. But the little we could see—this baffling wilderness of forest, hill, and river—represented practically the sum total of our knowledge concerning the country in which we were about to operate; and the enemy against whom we were to be pitted was notoriously cunning, passionately fond of a stolen fight and a merciless ambush, was skilled beyond aught else in woodcraft, and possessed the tremendous advantage of knowing every inch of the ground. All that, to the younger members of our party, gave the expedition its peculiar fascination. The very difficulties elevated the whole affair into an adventure, a romance. But it was an appreciation of these very facts that gave our seniors pause. On our side we said, 'Let us explore. Let us organise our own intelligence department. Let us trust to the almighty luck of the British Army, and lose no time in giving the rebels a lesson.' We were wild to plunge headlong into the Unknown, to splash about for ourselves, to pick up our knowledge of the lie of the land, political and geographical, as we went along—as we needed it. The supreme recklessness which is born of the energy and sublime self-confidence of youth was ours. We jibbed violently against the decrees of our more prudent elders; but ever the answer came, 'Wait for Simon Strange. Strange knows the country like the palm of his hand. If it is possible for a man to get through to us Strange will come. We must sit tight and wait for Simon Strange.'

Concerning the petty local politics of the region we were as ignorant as we were of its geography. Few men in Asia bother their heads about the inter-ravel of tribal complications beyond their immediate sphere of action—the intrigues and counter-intrigues, the family feuds, jealousies, rivalries, relationships, alliances, the little ignoble incentives which move men to do or leave undone the hundred and one things which taken together make up the welter of ugly political passions in which the little native States wallow everlastingly. Least of all do men concern themselves with the personal element which enters so largely into these matters—with the characters of the insignificant chieftains and their advisers, men who bulk so big in these microscopic worlds. It is known vaguely that it is the business of some one or another to keep his eye glued to such trivialities, so that when of a sudden a thorough understanding of them becomes an affair of importance the wheels of the greatest administration in the world

may not be stayed or hindered. But men are none too plentiful in Asia—"the grim stepmother of our kind," who uses up her children all too fast; wherefore such special information is often locked away inside one man's brain, and when the moment comes for utilising his knowledge that man for a little space becomes that least common of objects, a man who is indispensable. An appreciation of this fact was doubtless in the mind of our leaders, but they did not condescend to enter into explanations with us. They contented themselves with bidding us wait for Simon Strange, vying with the natives, meanwhile, in lauding him as a person of exceptional endowments. We—I use the pronoun to indicate us youngsters, the fiery and untamed but withal impotent mutineers in the camp—were inclined to despise native politics, and to think only of the glorious rough-and-tumble that awaited us in the valley below, from which we were withheld in the name of Simon Strange. This was the *alpha* and *omega*, the base and the pinnacle of the edifice of his offending, and the chorus of extravagant praise which white men and natives around us combined to chant in the fellow's honour made us positively sick.

We held an indignation meeting one afternoon when the game of 'tip-and-run,' with which we were wont to solace ourselves during the cool hours before the gloaming, was over. The sun had gone to bed behind the range of western mountains, and the sky was one glory of wonderful crimsons and mauves, with here and there a dash of vivid scarlet, an inlet of ethereal azure, or a delicate streak of opalescent tints. The hills stood out against the brilliant background, looking incredibly close at hand and painted an even Prussian blue; the valley, lighted up by the glow in the heavens, was greener than an emerald; and we hated the whole scene with fierce hatred, because we longed to be up and doing, and the mysterious Simon Strange held us in bondage.

'Old Mark-Time'—this was the nickname by which our Commanding Officer was irreverently known among us—"talks of the chap as though he was a little tin god," growled one of us.

'For my part, I am full of sympathy with the Athenian citizen who was weary of hearing Aristides called "the Just,"' said I.

'I am growing sceptical about the fellow's existence,' chimed in another youngster. 'I believe he's a myth—a sort of official Mrs. Harris. "I don't believe there's no sich a person!"'

And then, out of the gathering shadows, two tattered scall-

wags emerged suddenly. 'We be men who are of the following of Túan Streng,' said one of them, and from somewhere in the foul rag with which his long, lank hair was bound he produced a soiled and crumpled piece of paper. 'This is a letter,' he remarked.

'Mrs. Harris has materialised sufficiently to write a letter anyhow,' I said, and we bore the note off to old 'Mark-Time.'

He and the Second-in-Command read its blurred pencilling with anxious eyes, and we all hovered around expectant and excited. The letter was not for us, however, and though its arrival was an event, in that it broke the monotony of our life, and proved that Simon Strange was not a mere figment of old 'Mark-Time's' imagination, we were cynically convinced that it would only lead to further maddening delays. In the meantime we fell to questioning the messengers, and for men who had thought themselves capable of organising a working intelligence department unaided, the results which we obtained were not inspiring. There could be no doubt as to the loyalty of *these* natives, for they had come through the enemy's country at the risk of their lives. They were ready and anxious to put us in possession of all the information which we needed, but their limitations, and perhaps our own, made this a matter of difficulty. They could tell us, of course, that Strange was still holding out, that there seemed to be a sufficiency of supplies in the beleaguered stockade, and that the country lying between us and our goal was in the hands of the enemy, but when it came to details we soon found ourselves hopelessly at sea. What in the wide world, we asked one another, was a sane man to gather from such statements as these: that from one place, which we had never heard of, to another, which was altogether unpronounceable, the distance was such that a man, bearing no burden, who started before the flies were on the wing, would arrive at the hour when the kine go down to water; that two other villages with impossible titles were divided from one another by a distance such as a man might cover during the mastication of a quid of betel-nut; that the pools in the main river, which might have to be bridged or forded, were as deep as a basketful of fishing-lines uncoiled; that one chief was a 'file' and another 'a head of wind'; that the forces of the enemy were as numerous as the ears of rice in a field ploughed by one yoke of oxen, or perhaps by one yoke and a half? The two messengers disputed warmly as to the precise reply to be given to each of our questions, and only arrived at answers such as the above after a

painstaking effort to insure mathematical accuracy. We laughed feebly, and confessed ourselves beaten. It seemed to us that we had come into a country in which all matters of topography were questions of pure speculation; in which the measurement of distance was altogether arbitrary, depending upon the imagination of the individual, and upon a set of picturesque but meaningless phrases; a land in which arithmetic ceased to be numbered among the exact sciences; in which every practical thing in life had become nebulous, baffling, and unspeakably exasperating. At the mess-table that night old 'Mark-Time' and the Second-in-Command were jubilant. They confidently predicted the speedy arrival of Simon Strange, were lavish in their encomiums of his energy, pluck, extraordinarily intimate knowledge of the people and the country, and loud in their self-congratulations, in that they had done wisely to curb a very natural impatience, and to await his coming. We youngsters listened submissively, with our tongues in our cheeks, and now and again exchanging furtive winks; but I think it was beginning to dawn upon some of us that old 'Mark-Time' had been right, and that there is truth in Whewell's saying that we are none of us infallible, not even the youngest.

And then at last, after a further day or two of waiting, Simon Strange came.

II.

The manner of his coming was in this wise. There was no parade that morning, and we were all assembled in the rickety mess-hut, eating our *chota hazri*, sitting on empty packing cases, smoking and swapping lies, as was our custom on such occasions. The sentries had reported that the sound of firing had been heard during the night from one or two of the villages lying directly below our hill, and I had been called before the dawn to look at a number of bonfires which had been lighted up and down the valley. We did not know what these things might portend. We were rather shy of jumping to conclusions concerning the meaning of anything in this mysterious country since our humiliating experiences on the evening when we tried to pump the men who had brought in Strange's letter. Still, it looked as though things were moving at last, and we were filled with hope that the enemy had made up his mind to attack us, since we showed no signs of

assuming the offensive on our own account. That the rebels would be guilty of an act of madness if they made any such attempt was of course obvious, but, the wish being father to the thought, we convicted our foemen of insanity quite light-heartedly and with complete satisfaction to ourselves.

While we were discussing this aspect of affairs, suddenly a white man marched into the hut. He was a very tall, fine-run young fellow, broad of shoulder, deep of chest, lithe and active as a cat, and blessed with one of the longest, leanest, and most serviceable pairs of legs that a man ever owned. He wore a big felt hat, a grey flannel shirt, unbuttoned at the neck, and with its sleeves rolled up above the elbow, a broad leather belt, supporting a holstered revolver and countless pouches, a pair of discoloured jungle pants, small anklet gaiters, and light canvas shoes. He was tattered and stained with mud, and he was dripping wet from head to heel. Our attention was chiefly claimed, however, by the burden which he bore upon his back, under the weight of which his square shoulders were bowed. It was wrapped in an old and much-soiled native cloth of many colours, and from it emerged two skinny brown arms which were clamped throttlingly around the white man's throat, and two thin brown shanks which dangled limply one on either side of his hips.

The new-comer stood for an instant framed in the low doorway of the hut, nodded to us casually, said 'Good-morning,' as though he had parted from us all on the preceding evening and this meeting was a thing of course, and then, stepping lightly to the only chair which the mess possessed, unshipped his burden skilfully, and laid it down very softly in the sag of the canvas. The burden gave vent to a low groan, and some unintelligible words in the vernacular broke from it, and were answered by the stranger in the same tongue. Then we noticed that the stains on the cloth in which the native had been slung were great black patches of blood, and, as we watched, these began to spread impartially over the immaculate canvas of the chair. Now this chair, the property of old 'Mark-Time,' was at once the dearest of his possessions and the only thing whose profanation could move that slow man to wrath; yet, wonderful to relate, there was no note of anger in the Commanding Officer's voice as he started up from his seat at the table and cried, 'Strange!'

'How do you do?' said the new-comer, without even looking up from his task of disposing the limbs of his *protégé* in an

attitude of greater comfort. 'I suppose one of you chaps is a doctor, eh?'

Manwering, our little 'Pills,' stepped forward.

'Oh, you are a doctor, are you? That's all right. Look here. This fellow of mine has been shot through the thigh. No bones broken or arteries cut, I fancy, but he has had time to get stiff, and is in pretty bad pain. Will you just see what you can do for him?'

Manwering examined the man's wound tentatively without removing the handkerchiefs with which it was bandaged. 'We must get him carried to the hospital. Wait a minute and I'll call——'

'That's all right. You show the way,' said the new-comer, lifting the man in his arms firmly but very tenderly, and, without sparing us so much as another look, he carried his patient out of the mess-hut at the doctor's heels. It was very pitiful to see the expression with which the injured brown man looked up into the face of the youngster who stooped above him bending slightly under the weight of his burden. The native's eyes had in them just that pathetic trustfulness which is to be seen in the eyes of a dog whose master is trying to do what he can to relieve his sufferings. I think that in that hour I began to understand something of the secret of the power which Simon Strange exercised over the native population of this wilderness, something of the reasons for the devotion which he inspired and of the strong appeal which he made to the imaginations of his primitive people.

'So that is the great Strange!' said one of us when he had disappeared. 'He's a pretty substantial myth, anyway.'

Old 'Mark-Time' was looking rather ruefully at the stains upon the chair-canvas, and I fancy that he was not best pleased at the discovery that a wounded native seemed to be more important in the new arrival's eyes than the Commanding Officer of an expeditionary force. 'It looks as though Master Strange had been getting into one of his scrapes,' he said disapprovingly, and then we all sat smoking in a silence only fitfully broken until the stranger came back to us.

This he did in a matter of half an hour or so, and, after shaking hands with us all, he settled down steadily to devour an enormous meal. He was quite unabashed by the fact that the change of clothes which Manwering had provided for him was a grotesque misfit in which any one less utterly devoid of self-

consciousness would have been painfully aware of cutting a ridiculous figure before a number of complete strangers. He explained his appetite, which certainly seemed to call for explanation, by saying that he had not touched food for four-and-twenty hours, and he also mentioned casually that he had not tasted bread for eight weeks or seen red meat for nearly a twelvemonth.

'I shall not trouble you, Strange, with any business to-day,' old 'Mark-Time' said in his most condescending and pompous manner. 'I feel sure that you will require to sleep after your late exertions.'

'That's all right, sir,' said Strange cheerfully. 'You need not bother about me. I'm as fit as a fiddle, and game for any amount of work. I shall get all the sleep I need to-night, I dare say.'

So, as soon as the meal was over, Simon Strange and the Second-in-Command were closeted with old 'Mark-Time' in the latter's hut, and I was privileged to be present as a sort of secretary. I have very rarely been a spectator of anything that interested me more keenly. The interview lasted the whole of that day, with short breaks only for meals, and was carried on late into the night, and during all that time Simon Strange, alert, instinct with a sort of magnetic energy, a perennial spring of accurate and curious information about the country and the natives, at one moment acutely critical, at another startlingly suggestive and original, and always just a little humorous, inspired, guided, and controlled the decisions of the two older men. He not only had a quite unholy knowledge of this wilderness which spread around us, but he also possessed a queer knack of making those who heard him share his understanding of political questions, details of topography, and the hundred and one other points which must mould our plans for us. Up to the time of his coming we had been enveloped in a perfect mist of uncertainty and mystery; at the end of that day I, for one, felt that I knew more about the troubled land than about any other place on earth. And his body and his brain alike appeared to be tireless. More than once I detected old 'Mark-Time' in a feeble attempt to break out of school, and I thought that the Second-in-Command was not unwilling to aid him, but Strange kept the noses of the pair of them fixed to the grindstone, and dinned into their ears the necessity of acting promptly now that the time for action had arrived. Even I found myself getting weary of sitting in a stuffy hut, yet we, who had been in camp all these days, had come to the council-

board fresh from restful nights and hours of ease, whereas Strange had barely finished a terrific tramp over hill and dale, and had certainly spent at least one night out of bed and on his feet. I was already enormously impressed by the force of the man, by the effortless fashion in which he seemed to dominate us, by his boundless powers of work, physical or mental, and by his extreme reticence concerning himself and his own experiences and exploits.

When at a late hour Strange rose up, stretched himself elaborately, and said that he thought that we were now in a position to begin practical work—doing, not talking—on the morrow, I heard old 'Mark-Time' sigh with satisfaction, and I watched him toddle off to his sleeping-mat with the air of one who is quite played out. Strange bade us good-night and went away to a neat shanty which some natives had rigged up for him—natives seemed in this country to spring up out of the ground to serve Simon Strange—and as the Second-in-Command and I walked up and down, smoking our pipes in the moonlight before turning in, we could see him sitting cross-legged under the low thatching of the roof talking to a succession of brown-skinned men. Each of these had come many miles, and had awaited patiently for hours the opportunity of pouring his information or his troubles into the ears of 'Túan Streng.' In the dull glare of the hurricane-lamp, swinging from a rafter above his head, Strange's face showed pale and worn. The sun-tan on cheeks and forehead, arms and neck, which by day gave him an air of health, showed now only as a sickly pallor; the lines around his blue-grey eyes and about his firm, straight mouth seemed to be furrowed deeply; his erect figure looked for the moment almost bowed.

'Well, what do you think of him? He's a glutton for work, isn't he?' said the Second-in-Command. Before I could reply we were joined by Manwering, the doctor.

'I see that Strange has let you out at last, sir,' he said to my companion, 'though he is still at it himself. I wonder what that fellow's made of! When you remember that this is a tropical climate, it fairly takes your breath away to think of the amount of work the man asks of himself. Now just take all that he has been through since he left his stockade. That wounded nigger he brought in has been talking to my dressers, and they have passed the yarn on to me. Strange would not take an escort with him, it seems, partly because he thought he would have a

better chance of slipping through the enemy's country if he went almost alone, and partly because he couldn't afford to reduce the little force which is holding on to the stockade. Accordingly he set out by himself, unless you count the native who tells the story. The rebels were posted all round the stockade, but Strange crawled through their camps during the dark hours before the dawn, and lay up in a clump of jungle for the day. It poured with rain the whole time, the native says, and he and Strange had to lie out and get soaked. As soon as it was dark they got under way again, and trudged along villainous jungle-paths till the dawn found them in the heart of the enemy's country and about thirty miles distant from any of their friends. Here they lay up in the forest for the day, but the native had managed to drop the bundle which contained their store of food, so they had nothing to eat, and again the rain poured and poured. It must have been the very devil, you know—drenched to the skin for more than seventy hours, a tramp by night over thirty miles of infamous jungle, every tree and bush of which might harbour an enemy with a rifle, and neither food nor drink at the end of it all, but just a "lie off" in the pelting rain! Enough to kill any man in any climate, let alone the tropics. It makes my professional hair stand on end to think of it, and the beggar hasn't even the grace to have fever, or to behave as though he were tired out!

'However, that's not all. When dark came they started forward again, with another thirty-mile tramp ahead of them before they could reach us, some hills to climb, and the real strongholds of the enemy to avoid. They must have been pretty sorry for themselves, I should think—fagged and starving and soaking wet, and with their very lives depending upon their not breaking down—and the native, judging from what he says, felt that they were in a precious tight place, and had not got the spirit of a louse left in him, but just kept on keeping on because Strange had hold of the soul of him and wouldn't let go—at least that's how he puts it. Well, they got through the first five-and-twenty miles of their march somehow, leg-slogging through the darkness, swarming up hills that had a cant on them like the pitch of a thatched roof, and sliding down the other side into the valleys to wade knee-deep through bogs and slush, and to lose themselves in the dense mists rising from the plain. It must have been a beast of a journey through that broken country

among the spurs of the foothills, and the native could never have done it, he says, if Strange hadn't just *made* him hang on and not give in. They came by a short cut, it seems, because though there was a safer way it would have taken them a long tramp round, and Strange thought the native wasn't up to the extra exertion. Anyhow the route they took led them straight through a cluster of villages in which the enemy was strongly posted. They made their way past five or six of the villages without mishap, with their hearts more or less in their mouths, and one eye cocked on the closed houses, and the other glued to the east, fearing every moment to see the dawn creeping up and giving them away. Then, as bad luck would have it, they ran right into a couple of men who were coming up from taking an early morning dip in the river, and a minute later the whole place was humming around them like a disturbed bee-hive.

'Strange broke into a double, but the native was too done to follow suit, and as soon as Strange saw it he slowed down and waited for him. There was a good deal of promiscuous firing going on, not aimed at anything in particular, but helping to spread the alarm, and presently beacons began to spring up on all the nearest hills to warn the valley that Strange was trying to make his way through.'

'Those must have been the bonfires I saw this morning,' I said.

'The next thing that happened was that they were pursued in force by the men in the village which they had last traversed, and Strange, dragging the native after him, plunged into the jungle. If he had been alone he could have given them the slip easy enough, but the nigger handicapped him, and he never seems to have even thought of letting the poor devil take his chance. From what I can learn the nigger would have been glad enough to be left to die in peace. He says that he was so fagged that he did not want to live, and he says he can remember trying to explain this to Strange, as well as his sobbing breath would let him, and getting nothing but a severe shaking for answer. Well, they seemed to have ploughed along like this for a time—for whole æons of time, the nigger says—and then they knocked up against a little band of the enemy which was out after them. They received a volley before they could duck behind some fallen trees, and a bullet hit the nigger in the thigh. Then, he says, he was almost glad—he didn't feel any pain at the

moment, but was conscious of the warm blood trickling down his leg—and now he thought that Strange would let him give in. He lay as still as a mouse, and Strange fired the whole magazine of his Winchester at the rebels, and then snatched up the other repeating-rifle with which the native had been armed. He must have made some pretty shooting, the native thinks, for the party of rebels drew off, shouting war-cries, but evidently having had their bellyful of fighting for the moment. Then the nigger begged Strange to leave him to die in peace and quietude; but no such luck. Strange bound up his wound, rolled him in his waist-cloth, and humped him up on to his back—a precious tough job, I should say, for a man who had already been through such a frightful time of hardship and exertion—and after that the native knows very little more except that he thought the journey would never end, and that Strange seemed to be everlastingly splashing up beastly little streams, or forcing his way through scrub and underwood. Of course he did not dare make use of any proper paths, and if he had not known the country quite marvellously well he never could have struck our camp. Still, he did strike it, as we know, saved his worthy nigger, and has himself been working like a trooper ever since. The man must be made of iron!

'Or grit,' said the Second-in-Command. 'If he had been in the Service he would have been given the V.C. As it is, I don't suppose it will even be reported, except by old Stubbins' (Stubbins was old 'Mark-Time's' rightful name), 'and he has not the gift of expressing himself; so I doubt whether his despatches are read as carefully as they ought to be.'

'What a shame it seems,' I said, with all the ready indignation of my years. 'It was a splendid thing not only to have done, but to have been able to do!'

'Splendid enough,' said Manwering; 'but what chiefly appeals to me is the extraordinary strength and vitality which make such a thing possible. The fellow is phenomenal—absolutely phenomenal—wrought of cast-iron within and without, compact of force and energy. Fancy going through an experience like that, with all its accompanying strain on mind as well as body, carrying a man—even a small man like the nigger—for a matter of five miles after a tramp of nearly sixty, half of which was done on an empty stomach, and in this climate, and then to come in at the end of it all apparently as fresh as paint! I tell you that the

thing is colossal, but it can't last. The fellow is drawing gigantic cheques upon his constitution, and one of these fine days Nature will foreclose, and call upon him to stump up the overdraft. You mark my words.'

It is not my intention to relate the details of the nine months' campaign which followed, but during the whole of that strenuous time Simon Strange did the work of a dozen ordinary men. It was not that he made unnecessary work, or that he kept a pack of dogs, but preferred to do the barking himself. On the contrary, he had a wonderful gift for making others 'pull up to the collar,' as he called it, and his energy was infectious. It so happened, however, that the circumstances in which we were placed, the magnificent ignorance of the country and the people that was ours, threw a heavy burden on his shoulders which none other might bear. Our force was soon divided up into half a dozen tiny columns, all more or less groping in the dark, and Strange was the inspiring genius of each one of them. He was eternally dropping down into camp out of the skies, and immediately all was hurry and bustle, and quick movements were followed by some small but, in its way, decisive bit of work. He passed ceaselessly from column to column, always carrying his life more or less in his hand as he went on foot without escort from one party of our people to another, bringing in the information lacking which we were paralysed, organising our transport and commissariat for us, beating up supplies and coolies from out of a seemingly deserted countryside, initiating and almost dictating the strategy which we employed against the enemy, and all the while carrying on his own 'political' work, and settling up the districts and their government as fast as we reduced them to order. He had one or two civilian youngsters to aid him—men who were a sort of rough understudies of himself—but the lion's share of all the work to be done fell to his lot, and we military officers never felt much confidence in anything unless we had Simon Strange's warranty for it. He toiled like a demon, never spared or saved himself, never appeared to be harassed or overdriven, was always quite calm and happy, and was invariably in the mood for more work. We with the columns were often at rest for days and weeks together, but his labours never seemed to suffer from even a momentary break. He was altogether indifferent to such needs as food or sleep, eating what and when the opportunity offered, or going without for long hours at a stretch with com-

plete good humour, and sleeping on the ground in the rain, or not at all, just as the work to be done rendered necessary or inevitable. The prejudice which had been born in our minds of the native rumours which preceded his coming amongst us had died out from the first moment of his arrival. His was a figure to appeal strongly to the imaginations of young and enthusiastic men, and very speedily we youngsters were the veriest hero-worshippers, and Simon Strange, with his force, his strength, his splendid courage, his abnormal power of work, his simplicity, unconsciousness of self, and complete lack of anything resembling 'side,' was our idol.

At the end of the nine months of fitful fighting, marching and countermarching, attacking and destroying villages, ambushing and being ambushed, the rebels were crushed, and our force was withdrawn, Simon Strange being left behind to bring peace and plenty back into the stricken valleys. He bore us company as far as the top of the range which formed his boundary, 'to see us off the premises,' as he said, and while our long, snake-like column wriggled down the hill-side, *en route* for civilisation, comfort, and good victuals at last, I took one look back from my position with the rearguard at the man whom we were leaving in the wilderness.

In fancy I can see him now as he then appeared to me—a big, lean figure silhouetted against the clear sky-line, clad in rough garments, with a group of natives squatting humbly around him—the incarnation, as it were, of England's calm, paternal, unostentatious sovereignty over a savage people in a distant land. He was gazing after us, a little wistfully perhaps; for were we not marching back to the good things of this world, leaving him to the utter loneliness of his life, to the hard, dull, exacting labour of reconstruction that must ever follow upon the excitement and turmoil of warfare? Also, the hardships and privations that, even in the milder form in which we had endured them, had been to us an exceptional and not too acceptable experience, though ended for us, were still, for him the natural conditions of existence.

'Poor devil!' said the man at my side. 'I wouldn't be in his shoes for something, *planté là* in the heart of the wilderness, and the biggest bit of his work still to do, without even the thrill of excitement to aid him.'

'Government looks to its men to take on pretty large con-

tracts out here,' I said; 'and the queer thing is that England breeds boys who simply revel in such jobs and are quite content with grub-wages. Simon Strange is not exactly expensive at five hundred a year; and I don't suppose they give him a penny more, if as much.'

'It is cheap—dirt-cheap,' said my friend, 'seeing that it is the price of a man's body, of the best years of his life, and a precious big slice of his soul thrown in.' And then we fell to talking, in joyful anticipation, of the delights of the civilisation that awaited us, for which our appetites had been sharpened by our nine months' campaign. Yet during that time our life, if compared with that to which Strange was doomed in seeming perpetuity, had been almost easeful and luxurious.

III.

After that I almost entirely lost count of the doings of Simon Strange. Duty carried me far afield, and the very land where I had met the man, in which I had seen my first campaign, had become a dim and distant memory. New scenes, new interests, bigger politics, drove the thought of that little glimpse of the wilderness and of the solitary Englishman who was therein the dominant figure into the background of my mind; but occasionally some chance echo of news came to me, telling of peace and plenty duly restored to the troubled land, and of a thriving peasantry lounging away their lives contentedly under British rule, or under Simon Strange, its local incarnation. But as the years sped onward my memory recurred less and less frequently to the incidents of those half-forgotten days and to that lonely figure which I had last seen standing outlined against the white-hot Eastern sky.

I was back in London—back from the ends of all the earth—thrilling with the intoxication of delight which none save the exile knows who finds himself after many wanderings in 'the only place in the world'—the great, throbbing, tumultuous, strenuously pulsing heart of the Empire! The roar and rumble of the traffic, the gruff street cries and murmured English speech, the hum of a life, restless, animated, instinct with energy and vitality, made music in my ears that gladdened me. I was possessed by a tingling sensation of excitement: I had no need of

occupation to complete my sense of well-being. It was enough just to exist consciously in the midst of the things for which in banishment I had pined, to drink in greedily new impressions of objects old and familiar, to revel in the bare fact that I was once again in the Mecca of my dreams. Therefore, as I walked up Piccadilly that sunny morning, my feet were on the flags, but my head was soaring among the clouds of heaven, and thus I stepped heavily upon the varnished toes of a dapper little man, who forthwith let fly a volley of choice Hindustani expletives. Stopping to apologise for the injury which I had inflicted, I recognised Manwering, the little doctor who had been attached to our column in Simon Strange's country, and, following the custom of the East, I bade him drink with me, and led him into my club, which was near at hand.

For the best part of an hour we sat talking as exiles are wont to talk when they meet far from the land of their banishment, recalling past times which we had spent in company, memories which we shared, and the figures of men whom we had known under alien skies, the reality of whose existence somehow seemed a thing made shadowy by distance.

'You remember Strange—Simon Strange?' asked Manwering presently. 'Well, he's at Home—at Home for good, I'm afraid. You ought to go and see him. I can give you his address.'

'Has he chucked the Service?' I inquired.

'It has chucked him, poor devil. You remember that evening after he first came into camp, lugging that wounded nigger with him, and what I said then? Well, I was a true prophet of evil. He was drawing thundering big cheques on his constitution in a villainous climate, and now Nature is calling in the overdraft. Go and see him. It don't bear talking about.'

So later I travelled down to a dreary suburb of this great sprawling city—a cheap and nasty suburb, humdrum and commonplace, a dead level of struggling poverty-ridden respectability and dulness—there to seek out Simon Strange, the man who of old had played the rôle of destiny to a wide countryside. I saw his mother first, a sweet-faced, faded woman, with kind, sad eyes, and the lines of a life-long anxiety upon her delicate cheeks and brow. The dingy little house was eloquent of lack of means: the dress Mrs. Strange wore was itself a testimony to the sleepless vigilance which tries so vainly to make sixpence go as far as half-a-crown; the shadow of a terribly straitened income hovered

over the place like an oppressive cloud. There was no pretence, no trace of false shame; only the poverty was there, obvious, undeniable, crippling, emphasising the dreariness and the monotony of a narrow life.

'It is so good of you to come to see Simon,' said Mrs. Strange. 'It will cheer him up a little. He is wonderfully brave about it all, and he says little enough, but it is breaking his heart.'

'I have heard no details,' I said. 'They tell me that he has left the Service. Is that so?'

'Yes,' she sighed. 'His health has completely broken down. The doctors declare that he will never be really well again, and that it is out of the question that he should ever go back to the East. He has been retired on pension—a very tiny pension, of course, for he had only served just over twelve years.'

'Seventeen-sixtieths of a microscopic salary,' I mentally calculated. 'A piteously inadequate price for which to barter away one's health and all the joy of life!'

'The Government has done its very best for him,' Mrs. Strange was saying. 'They have written all manner of nice things about him and his work in the past—but, alas! it is the present, and still more the future, that troubles me for him. You see, he was devoted heart and soul to the people and the country and the work; they were his one interest—his life. And now it is all at an end. It is hard for a man to see his life brought to a close so early, yet that is what it means to him. You see, he is only three-and-thirty, and a man finds it difficult to say "good-bye" to his ambitions so very soon. But this won't do at all,' she added quickly, with a brave smile; 'I shall only depress you by my grumblings, and I want you to cheer my poor boy up.'

She rose and led the way to her son's room, where she left me alone with Simon Strange.

I question whether I should have known him for the man who still lived in my memory—the fierce toiler with body and mind, the fellow who had borne the reputation of being 'as hard as nails,' of having an exhaustless fund of physical strength and mental energy. He was seated in a big arm-chair, cowering over the fire, though the day was warm. His frame, always lean, was now woefully shrunken and fallen together; his skin was dry and was suffused by a sickly yellow pallor; his eyes, deeply sunken in their sockets, beneath which dark discoloured patches showed like bruises, wore a strained and weary look. His voice, of old so firm

and masterful, was thin, and it sounded as though it came from a great distance, but his face lighted up with something of the old humorous smile as he stretched out his hand in greeting.

'Awfully good of you to come, old man,' he said. 'You behold in me the miserable remains of an ill-spent life. I have been busy trying to pick up the broken bits for months, but it takes a lot of doing. I am still only fit for the knacker's yard, and yet I *must* get well soon. I hate being a log, and we want grist for the mill badly. It is terribly rough on the poor old *mater*. This smash-up of mine has been a dreadful blow to her, poor dear.'

I sat down, and we fell to talking about old times. For a minute or two Simon leaned forward and spoke with much of the fire and eager interest that had been wont to mark his utterance, but very soon he threw himself back in his chair with something like a groan.

'It does not do to think about it all,' he said; 'it only gives me the "go-fever," and I shouldn't be worth my salt if I was out there again with my health like this. I don't think even you can understand what a humiliation going *phut* in this fashion has been to me. Until my constitution turned dog on me I used to fancy that it was made of cast iron, and I suppose that I didn't give it much of a chance, but you know how it was—there was the work. It had to be put through somehow, and one hadn't much time to bother about anything else.

'Do? What do I mean to do? Get well first, and then look about for a job. A man at the Office tried to comfort me by saying that I must have made friends with some local merchants out in the East, and that, perhaps, if I threw myself upon their charity, they might find me a billet as a clerk in one of their London houses. He meant well, poor little snuffy beggar, and I shall act on his advice as soon as I am fit enough, but it isn't exactly a cheerful prospect, is it? Don't think that I am an ass, or that I am too grand to take any work that any one may be kind enough to offer me. It isn't that, only—— Well, you see the little chap who gave that advice has been nailed to a stool all his life; he had never got a glimpse of anything bigger than a bundle of fusty papers in a grimy office. Of course, he didn't understand—how should he? But the sort of life that I have lived doesn't fit one well for the dull grind he seemed to think so attractive. You see, I have wielded power over men—lots of men;

and I have been used to as much responsibility as a fellow knew what to do with. That's it—power and responsibility! The two combined make a strong drink which, once tasted, you cannot do without. Over here very few ever try a sip of it, so they don't crave for it, but we who have had our fill time and again find all other drinks insipid. Don't think me an ass. You know something of the life, and I expect you understand.'

I did not think him an ass, and I did understand. The talk shifted to other more cheerful subjects, but it always wore its way back to the same point—to the past and all that life had held for Simon Strange, the all that it could never hold for him again. His memories tortured him, but they would recur insistently. He had been all his life what in the East we call 'a doer,' but his days for doing were ended; he had been the Providence, omniscient, almighty yet visible, of a whole countryside—he who for the future was doomed to utter impotence. He had delighted in personal power and the stimulating burden of responsibility, not for the satisfaction of his individual ambitions, I fancy, but for the keen interest which they brought him, for the good which they enabled him to effect. Now, at best, if his enfeebled health allowed, he might look forward to monotonous days passed in the dull drudgery of a city clerkship, bending all his splendid energies to the task of trying to preserve himself and those who were dear to him from the pinch of a degrading poverty. Later, I learned that there had been a girl whom poor Simon had hoped to make his wife—a girl for whose sake, perhaps, much of his best work had been secretly done—but broken health and straitened means forbade all dreams of marriage.

Though he was so pitifully worn and aged, he was still young enough for the future to spread away before him in a seeming eternity, blank, hopeless, dreary, interminable! It was nobody's fault. The Government had done its part, and had written handsome letters. The performance of its proper functions would be impossible were it to concern itself too nearly with all the personal tragedies of its servants. Simon, too, was blameless. The work, as he had said, was work that had had to be done, and it was only evil fortune that caused the price to be so heavy, and made it fall all, all upon him.

I did my best to 'cheer him up,' though I knew that the thing was irremediable, and he strove to help me to illusion. He kept a stiff upper lip turned towards his trouble, and spoke of his

fate as a derelict, one 'cast' for decrepitude, with a grim humour that I found more pathetic than tears.

I took my leave and was whirled back to London, bearing with me the memory of a brave woman and her brave son, and admiring the 'grit' of the latter more that day than ever I had done in the time of his achievements and success.

The great roaring city greeted me—the heart of that Empire which makes and breaks so many things; but it seemed to me now less human and more mercilessly mechanical than ever before, the great main-spring, as it were, of some vast engine which works gigantically, successfully, but with a wanton prodigality of materials and tools. In common with most Englishmen who have travelled widely, and have marked things for themselves with a seeing eye, I hold that the British Empire is the mightiest agent for good that God in His infinite wisdom has ever brought into being in this His world; but my heart was heavy within me as I thought of the obscure litter-heaps whereon, neglected and forgotten, are thrown aside the broken instruments which, having served their turn, are suffered to crumble away into inglorious dust.

PROSPECTS IN THE PROFESSIONS.

III. THE SOLICITOR.

FOR the purposes of the information that I have been asked to give, and of such suggestions and comments as I may be able to produce out of the storehouse of my experience as a solicitor, I have to remember, and to ask my readers to remember, that I am addressing myself exclusively to British parents who have sons and have not decided what to do with them, and that I have to assume on their part dense ignorance of my subject. If I am able to keep on that track I shall say nothing that is already known to them, unless it be a stray observation here and there; and I shall say nothing that is not already known to every solicitor of experience, and also, no doubt, to many solicitors of no experience. If I fail to preserve the dividing line, I will only say in extenuation that I know of nothing more difficult than for a person saturated with a particular subject to speak or write of it to others without assuming on their part knowledge which they do not possess.

And now to the British parent. He has a son. Being a British parent, he probably has several, with proportionate multiplication of his anxieties at the stage of putting any one of them out into the world. I will assume that he possesses no special personal influence in any given direction, or that he has exhausted it in favour of some other son or sons. He desires anxiously to do what is best for his boy, and, looking round him, he says to himself—and probably also to his wife, if his domestic relations are as they should be—‘How about making him a solicitor?’

Now let us see what considerations he would obviously have to weigh before coming to a decision on that momentous question. It is not very material in what order they might come, but I will try to take them in logical sequence, and to supply as I go the information he would need to have.

First, then, has the boy's education so far fitted him to enter this profession, or does he need any special preparation before he can become an articulated clerk?

It is easy to answer this. The only needed preparation is such a general education as in all probability the son has received

or is receiving at a public school, and which (subject to a qualification presently mentioned) should enable him without difficulty to pass what is termed the 'Preliminary Examination' held by the Incorporated Law Society. This examination must, generally speaking, precede the act of binding the son to a solicitor for a term of years under articles of clerkship, but is dispensed with where the articulated clerk is a Bachelor of Arts or Law at various universities, or is an English barrister, or has passed any one of a number of specified public examinations. I do not enumerate these in detail, because the information is easily acquired from any educational authority.

I have just alluded to a coming qualification of my general observation as to the sufficiency of a public-school education as a preparation for climbing the not very formidable stile of the Preliminary Examination. I am not going to enter on the immensely disputed question of the merits or demerits of expending upon the Classics so large a share in a public-school boy's education. I only state as a fact closely bearing on my present subject that the Preliminary Examination includes divers homely branches of knowledge concerning which it was not thought necessary in the days of my youth to impart any serious instruction at school, and which, I believe, are still regarded in most public schools with amused toleration or thinly veiled contempt. Being for the moment on ground quite as familiar to the British parent as it is to myself (more so, probably, in most cases, as I paid my last school bill several years ago), I will not take upon myself to pick out these particular neglected items, but will leave him to put his finger on them in the following list of subjects, which are at present those selected for the Preliminary Examination :

1. Writing from dictation.
2. Writing a short English composition.
3. (a) The first four rules of arithmetic, simple and compound; the rule of three; and decimal and vulgar fractions.
(b) Algebra up to and inclusive of simple equations, and the first four books of Euclid.
4. Geography of Europe and history of England.
5. Latin, elementary.
6. Any two languages, to be selected by the candidate, out of the following six, namely, (1) Latin; (2) Greek, ancient; (3) French; (4) German; (5) Spanish; (6) Italian.

With reference to the subjects numbered 3 and 6, no candidate is obliged to take up algebra and Euclid, but if any candidate elects to do so he is allowed to take up these with one only of the languages.

The practical observation that arises on the point to which I have last alluded is that most lads need a little special preparation in the more rudimentary subjects in the above list before going in for the examination. An intelligent boy (I don't mean Lord Macaulay's young friend, but any boy of average ability) should be able to supplement his little deficiencies in a comparatively short time, and should need little help in doing so; but of course there are plenty of instructors available who lay themselves out to prepare candidates for such examinations; and again, in the case of a boy who is still at school, a hint to his master that he is destined for this examination will generally give the necessary turn to his studies, and subordinate for a time his researches into the not always very creditable proceedings of the ancient gods and goddesses to the waking realities of arithmetic and geography.

Still pursuing the educational point of view, many parents will, I think, be anxious to know whether or not it is better for a boy to go to college before entering upon his articles of clerkship.

If that question is asked by a father upon whom considerations of expense weigh heavily—that is to say, to whom it means a great burden to bear the cost of university education, followed by that incidental to the period of articles of clerkship—I answer at once and emphatically that there is no such advantage to be gained as to justify the sacrifice, even if I throw into the scale all that is to be said in favour of the university education and exclude all that is to be said against it.

Where considerations of expense are not of special importance relatively to the desire and the ability to equip the future lawyer for his career to the very best advantage, a much more difficult problem presents itself. Let me try to state the pros and cons.

In favour of the university training it may be truly said that—

(1) It completes the education to a riper point, and, in doing so, necessarily expands the intellectual powers, and makes more of a man of the article pupil before he enters on his legal training, and quicker to learn a new subject than if he comes as raw material straight from school.

(2) It gives him an opportunity of pursuing legal studies at

the university and taking a law degree, if so advised, with the result that before entering a solicitor's office he has acquired some knowledge of the principles of law.

(3) It may or may not—partly according as his choice of friends is made, and partly according to the accidents which determine whether college friends shall work out their after-lives at opposite ends of the world or in adjoining streets—provide him with companions on his journey through life from whom he will receive unfailing sympathy and, it may be, unfailing help.

The reverse side of the picture appears to me to be this :

(1) The staff of a solicitor is necessarily composed of various grades in the social scale, according to the nature of the work allotted to each. The articled pupil is not obliged to take the office-boy to his bosom or to ask a copying clerk to dinner, but he has got to come into constant touch with them and—I cannot better express it—to live with them. This process of assimilation is, I think, easier to a boy straight from school, because of his youth and (generally speaking) his diffidence and his proportionate gratitude for any friendly help given to him, than to a full-blown Bachelor of Arts. In saying this please remember that I am referring only to a real difficulty in the way of all articled clerks and the degrees of difference that I think it presents in the two cases that I am contrasting. I am not suggesting for a moment that the pupil from the university acts like a snob in the matter and the boy from school like a gentleman.

(2) The tedium and confinement of long office hours have often appeared in my experience to press more heavily on university men, even as a question of health, than on lads who have not experienced the freedom of college life. I cannot account for this, but it has been a matter of observation to me. Of course, the nose gradually becomes accustomed to the grindstone, and I do not put it forward as a serious disadvantage in any general sense, but in particular cases it has appeared to me to make just the difference between taking kindly to the profession and heartily disliking it—in the early days of studentship, at all events.

(3) The period of service under articles is only three years in the case of university graduates, as against five, or, in a few cases, four years for other pupils. After making every allowance for the more advanced intellectual stage at which the articled clerk

coming from the university commences his legal career, I am deliberately of opinion that three years is too short a time for gaining the amount of knowledge and experience which renders an articled clerk fit to blossom into a solicitor, and I would specially point out in this connection that the actual daily attendance at the office during this period has to be tempered by the allowance to the pupil of such indulgence of absence as he may need in order to prepare himself for two law examinations (known as the Intermediate and Final), one of which he has to pass, roughly speaking, half-way through the term of his articles and the other at the end; and of these the Final Examination exacts a very considerable amount of time. It necessitates, according to my experience, absence from the office for something like four months continuously, except in the case of those who consume a very large quantity of midnight oil after a day's office work, or possess extraordinary faculties.

(4) The articled clerk who comes straight from school not only gets five years of legal training as against three, or, as I have said, in some few cases, four years; but he also even then gets a start upon the university man in point of time. He begins his professional life earlier. This is not, perhaps, a very serious matter, but it does tell at least in the sense of marking the period at which the young lawyer may hope to earn a modest reward for his labours, inasmuch as it bears upon the length of experience to which at a given age he can appeal in putting forward his credentials.

Having said thus much, and feeling as I do that the considerations for and against college life as a preparation for entering into my profession are very evenly balanced, and that special circumstances must enter largely into the decision in individual cases, I would add that, roughly speaking, about a fifth of those who pass the Final Examinations for solicitors are university graduates.

Leaving behind the educational preliminaries that have to be considered, and assuming that a father desires to article his son, whether he be a university graduate or not, to a solicitor, we come to the very important question of the expense that the father will incur.

The expense may, I think, be summarised as follows:

(a) A fee of three hundred guineas paid down in advance to the solicitor, of which a proportion would be returnable only in

the event of death on either side; (b) a payment of 80*l.* to the Crown as stamp duty on the Articles of Clerkship; (c) an obligation to provide the son's expenses of every kind during the period of service; and (d) an uncertain, but not very considerable, amount of expense in the way of procuring legal text-books for his use, and, if needed (as seems to be increasingly the case in the present generation), the assistance of 'coaching' for his Final Law Examination.

The items of expense falling under my first three heads need no explanation, being, indeed, almost painfully simple; but I ought, perhaps (though it does not bear very directly on my subject), to say a few words in explanation of an expression often heard that So-and-so has been 'given' his articles. This means merely that a solicitor has accepted an articulated clerk without requiring any fee to be paid on the articles, an act of benevolence which he cannot, of course, extend also to dispensation from the stamp duty of 80*l.* The cases to which this expression applies divide themselves broadly into two classes, one being composed of instances in which 'natural love and affection' between near relatives or intimate friends come into play, and the other where the services of a faithful clerk are rewarded (often very unwisely in the interests both of the profession and of the individual concerned) by giving him a start upon the road leading to entrance into practice on his own account. In the latter class of case the favoured clerk usually receives the same salary during the period of his articles that his work would have earned for him if his ambition had not been thus gratified.

My head (d) is a varying quantity, of course, and I can only give an approximate idea of what it means. An expenditure of 5*l.* in books should carry a pupil down to the stage of passing his Intermediate Examination, and, during the later period, when more books are needed, a system of 'law lending libraries,' which has come into existence of late years, will enable economy to be studied, where it is an object, without injury to the student's examination prospects, though the joys of possession and of marking in the margin of a book the passages which he desires to engrave on his memory may cause the articulated clerk to incline personally to the purchase of a small library. In saying this I am assuming that for daily office purposes the pupil has access to a decent law library, though, I fear, this is not universally the case, and that there are offices in which articulated clerks (and unarticled

clerks, for that matter) are expected to make bricks without straw.

No expense is necessarily incurred, apart from books, in preparing for the Law Examinations—that is to say, there are no compulsory lectures or classes. It ought not to be, and it is not, actually necessary to seek any outside help for this purpose. But it has to be remembered that in nineteen cases out of twenty the pupil does not receive any assistance from his master directly referable to a coming examination, except leave of absence, and that so far as actual coaching or instruction in books is concerned, the master would as soon expect to be asked to instruct his artied clerk in the noble art of self-defence. So far as the Intermediate Examination goes, the pupil is examined as to his knowledge of a particular book or books. He has to read that book and nothing else. He needs no guidance therefore as to his course of study, and it is his own fault or misfortune if he fails to come up to the required standard. Outside help may be alluring and stimulating, but it can only be called a necessity in cases where perchance it were better that another walk in life had been chosen.

The Final Examination is another and much more serious matter. For this no books are specified or even recommended, and only the subjects of examination, which are of the widest kind, are announced. With the best of intentions an artied clerk may therefore well go astray in the work of preparation by selecting his books injudiciously or giving too much time to one subject and too little to another, to say nothing of any need of assistance in grappling with difficulties and bringing out the pith and marrow of this or that principle or doctrine of law. The Incorporated Law Society offer help in this direction to artied clerks, and there are also well-known establishments at which the raw artied clerk may be turned out as finished examination material. It does not lie within my compass here to contrast or appraise the relative values of official and unofficial aids to these examinations, and I will only say on the question of expense, to which I am addressing myself, that a father should be able to render his son all the help he can possibly need in the way of tuition for the Final Examination within a limit of cost of 25*l*.

In some professions the expense bestowed by a father on his son's studies, and the son's intelligence and industry in pursuing

them, offer at least a possible chance of direct pecuniary reward to the son, whereby the father may be presumed in most instances to be also indirectly a gainer. This is not the case to any appreciable extent with the articulated clerk of a solicitor. An examination for Honours is held immediately after each Final Examination, and liberal prizes are given for those who take the highest places, using the word 'prizes' in the sense which signifies gold medals and vellum-bound books. The distinction of coming out publicly in a high place in the Honours Examination is also of course an object of ambition to some (not by any means to all) articulated clerks, and may give a Hall-mark which will be of service afterwards in more ways than one. But the direct pecuniary inducements in the way of scholarships are limited to two scholarships, of which one is of 50*l.* a year, tenable for three years, and the other represents dividends payable during one year amounting to between 50*l.* and 60*l.* Both of these, I may add, as well as several of the medals and other prizes, have been founded by private individuals.

And now I come to a subject which cannot fail to exercise greatly the conscientious father—and that is the selection of a solicitor to whom to article his son. Of course in some cases the path is made easy for him. There may be in the profession a willing uncle or other near relative, or a godfather, who from motives of affection or some other sufficient reason is ready and willing to receive the apprentice. But I am not writing for the benefit of those who experience no doubt or difficulty; I am seeking to assist the ordinary average embarrassed parent who has no key to the profession in his pocket.

Now we may reasonably assume that the father has a solicitor himself to whom he has occasion to resort periodically, and with whom, we may hope, his relations are such that he would naturally ask his advice on this important matter. His solicitor may even be willing to receive the son as a pupil, and that may offer a fitting solution; but that does not exhaust the subject. Some fathers do not care to send their sons to the family solicitor. Some family solicitors do not care to receive articulated clerks. The family solicitor may be regarded by the father as an excellent person in his way, but that way may strike him as being dry, dusty, old-fashioned, unsympathetic, or crusty. The connecting link between the solicitor and client in our supposed cases ranges from the warmest personal regard and esteem to a tie kept together

only by considerations of convenience and reluctance to 'make a change.' This latter condition of affairs also applies in domestic life to cooks. Again, the nature of the particular solicitor's practice, or the place where he does, or does not, as the case may be, improve the shining hour, may not appeal to the parent. Thus there may be many reasons why the family solicitor may not be the means of settling the question and may contribute little or no help to its solution.

What then can be said for the guidance of the parent from a general point of view? In the first place, he has to remember that if he wants his son to have the best advantages that he can give him, he must be prepared to pay the full traditional fee that I have mentioned earlier, and must seek to place him in the office of a solicitor in large practice. Large practice is a relative term, and the father may well say that it is difficult for him to gauge the extent of the practice of any solicitor not personally known to him, but on this point I fear I must leave him to take a little trouble on his own account. He will obviously only enter into negotiation with a solicitor to whom he has a reliable introduction, and he must exercise his common sense in finding out beforehand what manner of man he is and what position he occupies in the profession. He must not be cast down, moreover, if he fails to secure for his son a seat in the office of the first, or even the second or third, solicitor who may be strongly recommended to him, for, in the first place, the wisdom of Parliament has decreed that no solicitor shall have more than two articled clerks at one time, and, in the second place, the particular solicitor may be averse to taking articled clerks at all. Perhaps I do not exaggerate in saying that a solicitor in very good practice generally makes rather a favour than otherwise of receiving an articled clerk, and pockets the parental cheque in something like the spirit of the Lord Chancellor in the 'Mikado' who remarks 'What, another insult!' when presented with large purses of gold for services of a less creditable kind than those to which I am now referring.

But then, again, there are different kinds of large practice. It may be a purely family practice, it may be in large measure a commercial practice (that is to say, a practice fed by work arising out of commercial transactions and the business side of life), or it may be a more or less equal mixture of both. In balancing the scales from this point of view, a father will naturally be wise to consider whether he himself has any personal influences which

lean decidedly in one or other of these directions as regards his son's professional career, so that the training of the lad's early days may best fit him to take advantage of his father's influence afterwards.

If no such special consideration arises, I think that he will be wise to select a solicitor who has at all events a very substantial proportion of commercial work in his practice. It offers, in my opinion, a wider and more open if more exacting field to the young solicitor for the subsequent struggle in life. As a rule, the family practice is a well-guarded citadel, and it is a fact beyond dispute that the mere possession of family deeds and papers goes a long way to secure the business for an apostolic succession of solicitors in the same office. Not so is it with commercial legal work. Even a son who fails to show the same acuteness and accuracy of thought, the same perception of the line of professional guidance needed to make the commercial client feel that he is being really helped and not delayed or impeded, the same untiring industry and disregard of his own personal convenience that may have brought his father success in professional life, will speedily find that he has not succeeded to a continuing inheritance.

Therefore, I say that for a young man of energy with no special influence and no predestined future marked out before him, training in commercial legal work, by no means to the exclusion of family legal work, is most desirable.

I have referred so far in this connection to the case of a parent who can afford to do the best that can be done. But there are many, very many, parents to whom it is a great struggle to provide a son with a professional career at all, and to whom a fee of three hundred guineas in addition to the heavy stamp duty is prohibitory. I am very far from wishing to discourage them. If they cannot provide for their sons what is best they do well in providing what is next best, and the next best is a solicitor who will take a pupil for a smaller fee and, within the limits of his opportunities and power, give full value for the money. Such solicitors are to be found in abundance by those who seek them carefully, and it is true to say also that so far as actual personal supervision is concerned a solicitor in comparatively small practice is, from the nature of the case, better able to give it than a solicitor who is often little more than a dissolving view seen at rare intervals and appearing in the flesh (generally late) only on the occasions of his articled clerk being invited to dinner.

Nevertheless a note of warning may, I think, be usefully given to parents who are thus circumstanced; and perhaps to those who love their Dickens as they should it may be comprehended in the word 'Pecksniff.' He, it will be remembered, received pupils, and managed for the most part to subsist on them without offering those professional advantages which they were entitled to expect, and which their parents may reasonably have anticipated. It is a sore temptation to the legal practitioner in low water—and Heaven forbid that I should sneer at any temptation behind which lies the gaunt spectre of poverty—to secure a premium for an articled clerk by offering attractions existing only in a fervid imagination stimulated by pecuniary embarrassment. Against such as these the parent must be on his guard; and he cannot be too careful to satisfy himself by every reasonable precaution, in the way of references or other reliable testimony, that the fee which he pays with so much difficulty and self-sacrifice will ensure for his son a sound if not ambitious training in his profession in the office of a practitioner who, though not in the first rank of successful lawyers, really has a business of appreciable volume and an unsullied name. In this process of walking warily the holding out to the parent of lavish expectations as to what may follow after the period of articles has expired may be regarded as a nearly unfailing danger-signal, and advertisements should be regarded with extreme caution.

And now I come to another matter that will naturally exercise a father's mind before he decides whether to launch his son in life as a solicitor. He will ask what are the qualifications of disposition and character that his son should possess in order that he may reasonably hope to succeed in his profession, and he will try to measure his son by the standard that the experience of those who are competent to judge lays down for his guidance.

Who shall answer this question to his own entire satisfaction? Not I, for one. I suppose that in several careers the son himself supplies, if I may use the expression, the motive power which guides his parents to their choice. The man who distinguishes himself in life as a writer, a painter, a musician, an engineer, has generally given unmistakable indications of genius in that particular direction in very early days, and pointed the way clearly enough for parents with eyes to see and ears to hear and a due sense of responsibility to guide them in acting for his best interests. Not always, indeed, are the signs perceived by narrow-

minded, selfish, or careless parents, and it is both melancholy and ludicrous to see the many instances in which a son obviously fitted only for one occupation is pitchforked into another, because it happens to be the least troublesome choice, or because the parents are blinded by prejudice or by their own obstinate predilections.

But for the profession of the law there is seldom any very marked indication for choice on the boy's own part, and the lad of nineteen who says he would like to be a solicitor generally speaks with much the same knowledge of his real bent in that direction as he did when at the age of eight he announced his firm intention of becoming an engine-driver or a bandit.

To say that good abilities are an advantage is an obvious truism. The remark applies equally to a pork butcher in his porcine way. To say that a capacity for close application to hard work of a sedentary kind is essential brings me nearer to qualities not by any means always possessed, and brings me as near to a definition as I can hope to get. I know of no innate faculty or trait of character that is sufficiently defined in a young lad to enable me to put my finger on it and say that the exhibition of it marks him out as specially fitted to become a lawyer. I am not for a moment meaning to convey that anybody who chooses to become a lawyer is as fit for the occupation as anybody else; but what I do mean to convey is that there are no sign-posts known to me, at all events, which will enable a father to judge that his son possesses the qualities that eminently fit him for that particular profession. I can only put it negatively, and say that unless a father believes his son to be physically and mentally capable of hard, exacting, and often—in its early stages, at all events—by no means attractive work, he had better abandon the idea of making a solicitor of him.

Lastly, what chances of success does the profession offer to a young man who enters it with all the advantages in the way of training that anxious parents can give him? I exclude for obvious reasons the cases in which the young solicitor is destined from the beginning to join his own father or some other relative, or is otherwise provided with a certain future, subject to health, good conduct, and industry, and confine myself to one who has behind him little if any direct business influence calculated to advance his fortunes.

He cannot as a matter of course, or even of probability, reckon

on staying in the office in which he has been articled. If he is fortunate—and of course also if he has acquitted himself well during his articles—a corner may be found for him there as a supernumerary, or he may even be lucky enough to step into some vacancy on the staff. He may be allowed to remain on sufferance and without salary until he can find a berth elsewhere. He may be expected to depart the day after his articles have expired. There is no rule or custom as to the relation between an ex-articled clerk and his master, and the latter must needs be left to act according to his own sense of what is right and fitting, as well as the limits of his office space and his practice. All that can be said is that the articled clerk who has been diligent and has availed himself of every opportunity of making himself useful will obviously be more likely to find favour when the crucial time arrives to which I am referring than the pupil who has allowed the golden hours to slip by him without appreciating their present and prospective value.

Outside the office in which the young solicitor has served his apprenticeship lies the world, and a cold, unsympathetic world it may often seem to him until he has found a legal harbour in it. Very few young men so placed venture to plunge straight into the responsibilities of professional practice on their own unaided account, fewer still are fit to do so. The period of studentship under articles is almost always, and necessarily, followed by another period in which the youthful solicitor gains experience in a more or less subordinate position in the office of some firm with an established practice. He may hope to gain for his work in that capacity a salary which, so far as it is possible to give a general indication, may be put at about 150*l.* a year (or even less, but seldom more) to begin with, and he may hope for a progressive salary according to the development of his own powers of usefulness, and he may also hope still more confidently that he will gain day by day (sometimes it must be confessed at the expense of his employer) the discretion, the experience, the matured knowledge, the capacity for bringing a trained intellect to bear on the problems of life as they present themselves in many and varied forms in a solicitor's office, that will ultimately fit him for the responsibilities and cares of personal practice.

And then what next? I can only answer—and I say it a little sadly—that next will come the chances of life in a profession that, like all other professions in this country, is unquestion-

ably crowded beyond the point at which supply and demand balance each other. I believe it to be the case that, as an actual question of bread and butter, the profession to which I belong is less hazardous than some others—certainly less hazardous than the Bar, which is the only other occupation in life that I am competent to speak of by way of comparison. But it has no great prizes to tempt the ambitious, and within its own limits few men achieve widely-known fame or great fortune. I have no means of appraising the fate or fortune of the young solicitors who go abroad to our colonies and elsewhere to seek—and, I hope, to find—their fortunes, but of those solicitors who stay at home (I do not say at ease) I have reason to believe that their average income may be put at a very modest figure indeed. But still the profession does, in my opinion, offer the prospect of moderate chances of success in life, as that expression is commonly understood, for those who patiently and diligently seek them. And if some fall by the wayside, and some fail to gain even the most modest reward in spite of unblemished character and unremitting effort, is not the same experience true of particular instances in every occupation in life?

But I hear the anxious father saying, 'I thought that a practice could be bought. Is not that a way in which I can advance my son's interests and secure his future?' Speaking generally, I am afraid not. Money, which can buy most things, may—and does undoubtedly, now and again—buy a sound professional practice. But in a really good business it is rare indeed for any outsider to be admitted as a partner merely because he is prepared to pay for the privilege, however excellent his credentials may be. There are generally eager sons, nephews, or managing clerks (I mean, of course, young solicitors serving in the office in that capacity), all hungering for a bunch of professional grapes whenever it is suspended in their own office, and they will naturally take precedence over any outsider; while so far as money may be involved in the matter, a young solicitor to whom a partnership is offered in a good firm in which he is already employed, on the terms of paying so much for it, will seldom fail to obtain the required amount, even if his own parents are not in a position to provide him with it. I do not say for a moment that the possession or means of obtaining money to pay as purchase-money for a business, or share in a business, and capital for use in it, are not very important means to an end.

I do say most emphatically that the mere ability to pay money for a practice, unaccompanied by other elements of patience, ability, industry—and, I fear I must add, good fortune—must not be regarded by a father as a very great advantage in his son's favour when the time comes for advancing his professional fortunes. And I would also say that the warning I have given as to the solicitor who offers to article clerks the most shining prospects on the most reduced terms applies with tenfold force to the solicitor who displays, by advertisement or otherwise, a fervent desire to take to his bosom a partner prepared to pay for the privilege of being thus embraced. I remember, among other experiences, an instance in which a young solicitor, eager to get into practice (matrimony being in his eye and money wherewith to buy a practice in his pocket), investigated one advertised practice after another, and when he brought the results to me he was obliged to agree with me that each was, if possible, less satisfactory than the last, until at length, in utter disgust and sickness of heart, he gave it all up and drowned his sorrows in the mineral water trade.

If I have felt obliged to utter words of warning—and, it may be thought, of discouragement—let me now turn to the brighter side of the picture and repeat what was said in my hearing not long ago by a distinguished and greatly honoured member of my profession when referring to his own success in life and ascribing it to its cause:

‘I know no reason whatever why any success that I may have had in the profession should not equally be attained by any young man who may enter it. I came to London without knowing a single person in the city of London. By necessity or misfortune I was compelled to work, and I did what every young man would do—applied myself, without regard to trouble, and without regard in any particular case to emolument, to working and to endeavouring to master the facts and the law of any case which I might have to conduct. Thus by degrees I gained some experience.’

These modest words should, I think, furnish some ground for encouragement to the father who meditates placing his son in the profession; and I will only venture to add that, apart from the question, however deeply important, of success or failure from a purely personal point of view, the solicitor who sets before himself, and steadfastly maintains, a high standard of professional honour

will unquestionably lead a life of usefulness to the community and gain the respect of his fellow-men in no ordinary degree.

Solicitors are gentlemen by Act of Parliament. What is a gentleman? Thackeray asked and answered that question in one of his writings :

‘Is it to have lofty aims, to lead a pure life, to keep your honour virgin, to have the esteem of your fellow-citizens and the love of your fireside, to bear good fortune meekly, to suffer evil with constancy, and through good or evil to maintain truth always? Show me the happy man who exhibits these qualities, and him we will salute as gentleman whatever his rank may be.’

Does not this hold out an ambition great enough to console any man for having his lot in life cast in a profession which has no Lord Chancellorship as its greatest prize?

THE WOMAN-STEALERS.

She had na' pu'd a nut, a nut,
A nut but barely ane,
'Till up started the Hynde Etin
Says 'Lady, lat alane!'—HYNDE ETIN.

AGES before the first dawn of history, when strange monsters wandered over the face of the land (a face that would in itself be utterly strange even in its most marked features to those who now dwell in it), when here and there in remote spots yet lingered some last survivor of the great Saurians of the prime, a little clan of our first forefathers, outlyers of the great Aryan race, had formed a tiny settlement among the saltmarshes and brackish lagoons fringing the east coast of the great grey sea which then rolled through the length of the Vale of Evesham. They were so far as they knew the only folk of their own race on this side of the Wide Water, and though they had dwelt in their little lake village, hard by where Cheltenham now stands, for two or three generations, the 'House of the Otter' knew well that they were but a pioneer settlement camping on the edge of an unexplored and dangerous country.

The rich grazing lands between the hills and the saltmarshes gave pasture, it is true, for their cattle and space to plant a little patch or two of barley and flax; some of their boldest hunters climbing the Cliffs of the Finger, which we call Leckhampton, had marvelled as we marvel now at Bel's Finger, the great rock pillar of the Devil's Chimney, had chased the elk and the aurochs over the bare uplands of the Cotswolds that roll back from beyond Cleve Hill, and even entered the skirts of the Wildwood, the great tongue of forest that then rolled down between the hills where now runs the road to Cirencester. But in spite of this these latter spots were to them and to all the tribe dread and unfamiliar, haunted by savage beasts and by the yet more savage Earth-dwellers, vague beings, the ghosts of dead races and forgotten gods, who were for the most part hostile to mortals and to be dreaded.

And yet with all their terror the grim wall of the cliffs and the great dark green fang of forest had an attraction, a fascination which was all their own, the double fascination of mystery and of danger. In the green twilight of the woods, among the

dark shadows of the cliffs, or in the utter loneliness of the open downs, men passed from the region of fact and possibility into the unknown. Each hunter on his return had some strange story to unfold. This one had found overgrown with weeds in a lonely alley of the forest the strange bones of a monster of old time, devil-begotten, huger than any shape of beast they knew; another, pausing on the edge of an open glade, had seen with his own eyes an Earth-dweller, formed like a hairy misshapen little man, flit across the clearing and disappear like smoke, naked, and bearing in its hand magic weapons of chipped stone.

Now and again the story was a wordless one, as when Ulpha, the son of Leolyn, had staggered home to die upon his own threshold, a javelin barbed with beautifully polished flint driven through his chest from side to side.

Thus it was that when Gwen, daughter of Belin the Druid, went hunting one fair spring morning and never returned, there was distress, it is true, but little surprise. Some demon-beast had devoured her, or she had been taken by the Earth-dwellers for a slave, and might even now be dwelling in one of their magic palaces underground; in either case she was dead to her family and to her own people; what the Earth-dwellers had taken they could hold in the teeth of any mortal, or even of Bel himself.

There were two men, however, in the little crannoge of the House of the Otter who dissented from the general view, and as fate would have it, they were the two whose opinion was of the greatest importance.

Caradoc the Smith, the chief of the tribe, had been betrothed to the girl (she would have been brought to his house before the moon had changed), and in the madness of his grief and rage he was ready to face man, beast, or devil in order to have her back, or if that might not be, to join her once more, though in the land of shades itself. But while he sat cleaning his weapons and staining upon his broad bare chest the war pattern of the tribe, another had been wielding on the same behalf the armoury of a very different warfare.

As he stepped forth in the grey morning from the door of his hut, naked but for his kilt of fox-skin and the gold torque of his rank, spear in hand and targe on shoulder, his great sword with its leaf-shaped bronze blade strapped to his left thigh to balance the long gold-hilted dirk on the right, he came face to face with the lean white-robed figure of Belin the Druid, red-eyed from a

night-long vigil, with the blood of some secret sacrifice half dried on his vestments.

The omen was of the best, and it was with a cheerful face that the chief bowed his head for the old man's blessing. It was given in few words, and with it, chanted in rough bardic stanzas, an oracle for his chase:

Living, but tied,
In the House of the Dead,
Sits Gwen thy bride.
The Arrowhead
Shall point thy way
Ere thy toil be begun;
Where the Blood-trail leads
Shall the Love-trail run.

From the causeway of the crannoge to the skirts of the Wild-wood it was but thirty minutes' distance, and the chief started to reach it at a long, easy hunter's trot that, like a wolf's, looked slow, but threw the miles behind him with a surprising rapidity. It was spring, and, despite his grief, the freshness of the month and the morning lightened the runner's heart. The half-tamed white cattle of the clan were grazing amongst the clumps of giant fern watched by naked boys with sling and staff. Once a great saw-toothed bird got up from under his feet, and once his quick eye caught sight of a little two-toed horse with its long, trunk-like nose flying away from his approach. He noted all these things as he ran, but only half consciously, for all the eye of his mind was centred upon Gwen—Gwen of the level grey eyes, Gwen of the brown hair. Had she come to his house in the ordinary course of things, she might well have sunk in his eyes to what were most of the other women of the clan—a something immeasurably his inferior, half drudge and half plaything, but henceforward she was and must be far different to him. She was the Lady of his Quest as a later age would have named it—the Prisoner of the Dead, as the priest had told him, and somewhat of the mystery of the after-world, somewhat of the passionate desire of this spring morning's trail would cling about her, he knew, for ever. As he thought of her, bound and helpless, calling perhaps upon him for aid and in vain, his stride quickened involuntarily, and his hand gripped till the knuckles whitened upon the handle of his spear.

He was by this time among the fringe of scattered trees which melted further on into the forbidding black wall of the forest.

He halted for a moment to gather his wits for their work, and it was thus, as he stood for a while, the soft breeze stirring in his long locks and the risen sun flashing back from torque and spear head and armlets, from the gold bosses of his shield and the amber knobs of scabbard and dirk hilt, that the scattered watchers below had their last view of him; the next moment he was swallowed up alive in the Wildwood.

Within an hour of his entry into the forest Caradoc struck the trail he sought, for he was the best hunter of his tribe, and for three hours or more he followed it without a check through all its loops and windings. He noted the stray feathers where she had struck down a brace of young pigeons with her sling, and hung for a moment on his heel beside the entrails of a sucking pig that she had speared and gralloched on the spot for easier carriage; he even halted by the fallen tree trunk where she had sat to make her midday meal, as was shown by the dint where she had laid aside her javelin on the grass and the scattered fragments of barley bread and meat. It was after this that the perplexity of the trail commenced, and that Caradoc began to realise that he and his love both were caught in some mysterious tragedy of the woods.

Here she had run, there leapt aside; now she had crouched behind a tree trunk (the javelin trembling in her hand had scored half a hundred tiny scratches on the bark), and yet anon she had turned short and halted, poised, so the footprints showed, for a spear cast. By itself this trail was easy enough to read; it was not what he saw, but what he did not see, that chilled the very bones of the searcher with a creeping fear. The trail was that of one panic-struck and hunted by some deadly foe, but of that foe there was not a single trace; there was no mark of hoof or pad on the soft brown earth, no scratch of claw or talon on trunk or on branch. The Wildwood seemingly had loosed upon her the ghosts of all its dead, and hunted her back and forth again into nothingness. Nothingness—for on a sudden the trail he had been hunting so long ran down to the edge of a little forest stream and there stopped.

The instinct of the woodsman, triumphing over the depression of his terror and bewilderment, sent Caradoc mechanically casting up and down stream to search for the spot where the trail emerged, but he did so in a fashion at once hopeless and half-hearted.

He turned up-stream first of all, and had scoured its banks for nearly half a mile, when he came suddenly upon a place where some great beast of the woods, possibly even the Mammoth him-

self, had stamped down to the stream where he came to drink a pathway of an iron-like consistency.

It was growing dark, and the chief realised with a sinking heart that his chase was over for the day; but the place was so promising a one, should Gwen have been laying deliberately a blinded trail, that he crossed the stream for one glance ere the light should utterly fail him.

He was well repaid. The twilight of the open was darkness here among the trees, but his quick eye discerned a scrap of white glimmering against the blackness of the path. He snatched it up, and as he held it in his hand the best part of the secret of the trail lay bared before him, and the words of the Druid's omen recurred to his mind with a new certainty of hope and of assurance. It was a tiny arrowhead of white flint, daintily barbed and polished, and still fastened by sinew-strings to six inches of broken shaft.

This was the first clue that Belin had promised him, 'the arrowhead that should point his way,' and he knew now all that had terrified him by its mystery in the fate of Gwen. The Earth-dwellers had her. They had herded her into the stream as men scare deer into a pen, so that the struggle of her capture might leave no trace, and they had blinded their own trail behind them as they followed her. She had been wounded, too—there were traces of blood on the stone—but not severely, for she had wiped it hastily, so that its whiteness might render it conspicuous, and, best news of all, the vigilance of her captors must have relaxed, or they would never have left it where it lay to point their road behind them.

For that night the fork and branches of a tree made bed and tent for him, and the raw flesh of a water-rat his morning meal; and when he set himself anew to the trail he found ready to his hand another link in the chain of the Druid's prophecy, for here and there as he went he found chin high upon leaf and fern frond little gouts and splashes of dried blood. Her captor must be carrying Gwen thrown across his shoulder, and she, wounded and helpless, had drained her own blood to make plain her lover's way before him.

The courage, the readiness, and above all, the assured trust in his succour, served to set that lover's jaws still closer, and to tighten yet more his muscles. His set purpose could be no stiffer, but behind the first gush of pity came an impulse of red rage. The blood-mist blurred before his eyes as he swore aloud

that gods, ghosts, or devils, the Earth-dwellers should pay full toll for this. Whether they were beings of this world or no, they could be killed, for three skulls taken at the coming of his tribe still stuck mouldering on the roof ridge of his hut, and by Bel and Ashtar there should be more ere long !

The trail grew plainer, and the Chief could discern now and again three several sets of narrow in-toed tracks. They had grown careless, and Gwen's captor now walked last of the three so that a broken bough, a torn leaf, or a dropped bead could take the place of the blood-clots with which the trail had opened.

So far all went well and plainly, but within half a mile the wood had sprung upon him another of those surprises in which it seemed to delight. In a clearing, where the fall of a great tree which had dragged down three or four smaller ones in its own ruin, had made a little open space, he came upon the site of the Woman-stealers' camp. The ashes of a fire, half a dozen gnawed bones, and the impressions of four bodies in the soft soil, all these signs were normal enough ; but that in this camp something sudden and deadly had taken place Caradoc was not slow to perceive. Full length across the fire a body had fallen, the marks were plain, and the body, moreover, of a dead man or a stunned, since he had never even writhed though the hot ashes must have burnt him to the bone. The identity of the dead was quickly gathered. Half a dozen coarse black hairs yet clung to the stone which his head had struck in falling, and a long flake of flint, the blunt end wrapped round with thongs of hide for a haft, lay overlooked beneath a bush near the fire. There was no blood to be seen.

What was the meaning of this new chapter in the story he was spelling out word by word ? The answer was found when amongst the scattered ashes a glimmer of gold caught his eye. It was the gold knob of a long bronze pin (his own handiwork) which Gwen wore thrust through the knot of her hair, bent now almost into a half circle and crusted from head to point with dried black blood.

The inference was obvious ; when Gwen's captors had camped for the night one of them had offered her some insult or violence, and in defence of her honour she had used, and used effectively, the only weapon that fortune had left her.

The dead man had been a person of importance amongst these mysterious beings, since they had been at pains to carry away his corpse. From this place the trail ran plain as a high

road. First went one of the Earth-dwellers, then Gwen (with bound hands, for she had been unable to put aside the brambles and twigs as she went), then her other captor bearing the body, as Gwen had been borne the day before, cast over his shoulder.

It was this very simplicity that had nearly wrecked the chief's quest beyond repair, for the Wildwood used him like a finished coquette, showing him most favour when she had reduced him to despair, and *vice versa*. The plainness of his way, and the fact that hitherto he had followed a cold trail, had lulled his vigilance, and though instinct made his tread noiseless enough, he began to follow carelessly and at a run.

Thus it was that, turning the corner of a mound, he came unawares upon two Earth-dwellers, naked ape-like beings, with bestial protruding muzzles and long flat heads, covered too, from crown to ankle, with bristly hair.

Two short javelins tipped with stag-horn came whizzing towards him before he had fully realised who they were. One flew over his head as he ducked, but the other snapped off in his flesh, skewering together his shield-arm and target. The two were jabbering and growling like animals, the foam lying white about their jaws; but Caradoc, with his head lowered, and his long lance dropped to the level, charged down upon them in silence. One was nailed to a tree trunk in a trice, the spear-head bedded deep in the timber behind him, but his comrade, swinging a heavy, short-handled flint adze, was upon the Lake-dweller before he could get his sword free of the scabbard. Twice the rough edge of the stone bit home, and even as the chief at last got his blade clear, the pain of his wounds seemed to overcome him, and he staggered back with shield and sword-hand lowered. The Earth-dweller, however, springing in with a yell to strike straight down at his opponent's unguarded head, found himself met by a parry that jarred his arms to the elbow, while at the same moment Caradoc drew the razor-like edge of his sword across the sinews at the crook of the knee. The wild man fell headlong, and a savage thrust of the broad bronze blade stilled the snarl of his disappointed hatred.

The chief stooped over the bodies for a while, and then (the times were fierce ones) passed on his way with two heads swinging by the hair from his belt, the necks plastered with clay, lest the dripping blood should betray him.

The evening was closing in once more to twilight when he reached at once the edge of the forest and the place of his search.

Before him lay a broad stretch of brown, wind-swept uplands, in whose foreground, not a hundred yards from his cover, stood a little clump of green, grassy mounds, from two or three of which oozed faint wreaths and curls of smoke.

Clear-cut they showed against the pearl-grey evening sky, line for line as the traditions of his tribe had painted them, the entrances to the magic palaces of the Earth-dwellers.

But for all the terror and mystery that to his mind hung about them, it was not these huts which held the Lake-dweller's eye, but another erection, with whose use he was far more familiar. It was a low barrow, very much such a one as that under which his own bones would one day lie. It stood midway between the skirts of the forest and the village, and about its base half a dozen old hags walked 'widdershins,' or in opposition to the sun, wailing with long-drawn howls of conventional woe.

As he watched, the ceremony concluded and the beldames turned to go, save two, who, in leaving, yet wheeled about now and again to shake their fists and screech tauntingly at the mound.

The action told him all he hoped for. The barrow must hold not the dead chief alone—for why should they insult him for whom they had just been mourning?—but also Gwen.

This was the 'House of the Dead.' Praise be to Bel and Ashtar, who had stood so staunchly by their servant!

The prophecy had said 'living,' moreover, and it could not be that it should be true in every other detail, only to prove itself false in the most important one. Surely the gods would never play off upon him so grim a jest as that.

Nothing could be done, he knew, till it had fallen dark, and so, having cut and trimmed a great stake to serve him as crowbar, and picked a selected dozen of pine knots for torches, he settled himself with a hunter's patience to wait for the setting of the moon. The fire-bag at his belt held tinder and a hardwood drill, and after half an hour's work and more he had fire smouldering at the end of a piece of touchwood, the glowing tip of which he kept hidden in the hollow of his hand. He stuck the pine knots into his belt, took the stake in his free hand, and, unarmed save for his dirk, set out for the last exploit of his trail.

Three steps only had he made from cover when he stopped short, his knees loosening beneath him and his flesh tingling with utter fear. On the top of the barrow, flickering against the darkness, was a thin blue flame, like no light that he had ever

seen. The Earth-dwellers might well sleep sound with such a sentinel as that on guard. But Caradoc was a brave man, and though the sweat dripped from his forehead and his walk was as uncertain as a drunkard's, he put his dirk between his teeth and went forward; and as he went the corpse-flare vanished again. The light reappeared once more; but by the time he had reached the mound his natural hardihood had returned to him, and he was able to search coolly enough for the entrance, which the disturbance of the turf quickly betrayed.

A stroke or two of the pointed stake laid bare to his touch a drystone wall and an entrance-hole blocked with three or four boulders. These were soon prised aside, and then, crouching in the hollow, he blew his touchwood into flame and kindled one of the torches.

On hands and knees he crawled through the hole, expecting every moment to feel his neck writhen by demon talons or to see the darkness beyond the ring of torchlight grow together into some shape of horror that by mere terror should smite him dead upon the spot.

The torch was smoky and dim and Caradoc's mind preoccupied with superstitious fears, and so it came about that he struck his head against the opposite side of the narrow circular passage or subterranean trench into which the entrance led, at almost the same moment as he laid his hand upon the stiff, cold face of a corpse, which he had twice dirked before he realised that this was one who had already been rendered harmless.

Strangely enough this ghastly find steadied the Lake-dweller's nerve. Ghosts he feared, but his acquaintance with corpses had been wide and of a practical nature; and, blowing the pine splinter into a brighter flame, he proceeded to take stock of his neighbour and surroundings.

The former was an Earth-dweller, his skull cloven to the teeth by a stone axe, whose body had been laid where it was as warden of the door. As to his surroundings, the passage in which he now found himself was about four feet high by three broad, and obviously ran all round outside the great central chamber of the mound, the entrance to which must now be sought for. It was soon found, and dirk and fingers were busy in clearing a passage, when from the inside came a faint moan, the cry of one in mortal agony or terror.

For the second time that night Caradoc's blood seemed to stop its movement through his veins, the next second it was

leaping madly, for faint and imploring through the interstices of the stone came in the same weak, piteous voice, 'The hand to the spear,' the rallying cry of his clan. The trail was finished, for it was the voice of Gwen.

The stones flew to right and left as he shouted in answer, and in another minute he had scrambled through, torch in hand, into the central chamber.

A stifling odour of mortality was the first thing of which he became aware; clearly this was not the only burial which had taken place in the mound; then, as the torch blazed up smokily, he started, for squatting opposite him, chin on hand, with staring lack-lustre eyes, sat an Earth-dweller supported against the wall of the vault.

A second glance showed him, however, that the thing was dead and retained in that position artificially, two of its stiff fingers being thrust into its nostrils to keep its head at the right angle, and the sight that was revealed to him as he raised the torch yet higher quickly drove every other idea out of his head. Face to face with the dead, and bound into the same position as her ghastly *vis-à-vis*, sat Gwen herself, naked, bruised, fainting, but alive. A crock of water and a raw rib or so of venison had been placed just out of her reach, and with their aid she was soon revived to lie for awhile, the courage broken down now which had held up so bravely while there was need, sobbing out her story with her head on her lover's breast.

She had lain only ten hours in the tomb, it seemed, and nerves were tougher, brains less easily turned in those days, but the horror of superstitious fear, the sense of being abandoned without hope to the power of the demon whose lust she had once so readily foiled, had gone far to break down her trust even in the love that had sought and found her at last in the House of the Dead.

Caradoc had heard her tale in silence, save here and there for a soothing word or gesture of endearment, but at the end his rage flared up, and without a word he struck the King of the Earth-dwellers across the dead face with the back of his hand.

Ten minutes later, with Gwen in his arms and a third head swinging from his belt, he was traversing once more the long dark alleys of the Wildwood, while, amidst the twittering of birds and the rustle of the wind in the branches, the world began to stir itself again for the dawn.

J. H. K. ADKIN.

THE MAKING OF MODERN EUROPE.

BY PROFESSOR T. G. BONNEY, D.Sc., F.R.S.

THE earth's history consists of three parts. One tells of its shaping, how the waters were gathered together as the dry land appeared and was carved into its present form; another traces the pedigree of the living creatures upon its surface; and the third is the story of mankind. Serious attempts to reconstruct the first and the second are comparatively modern; palæontology received little notice till the beginning of the nineteenth century, and Mr. Godwin-Austen, who died in 1884, was perhaps the earliest to make the physical geography of past ages an earnest study. Among those who have followed in his steps, the author of '*Das Antlitz der Erde*,' Dr. E. Suess, of Vienna, stands prominent. The subject is full of difficulties, which increase, like those in human history, as we go back in time. Though on many points opinions differ, a general agreement exists on the main principles of interpretation, and it is now possible to sketch the development of some of the large land areas on the earth's surface.

The best known among these, as might be expected, is the continent of Europe. In its present form it is, in the eyes of geologists, comparatively modern. There are early chapters in its history, telling of the varying distribution of land and sea and the rise and fall of mountain masses prior to the middle of the Secondary era¹—but to enter on these would be too long a task, so we will begin with the period in which the white chalk of our English Downs was deposited, for it represents geographical conditions very different from the present and these had lasted without any startling physical changes for myriads of years.

¹ Readers unfamiliar with geological terms may be reminded that the earth's past history is divided into three volumes or eras, and each of these subdivided into chapters or periods. The first and much the longest—Primary or Palæozoic—consists of the Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, Devonian, Carboniferous, and Permian; the next—Secondary or Mesozoic—of the Triassic, Jurassic, Neocomian, and Cretaceous; the third—Tertiary or Kainozoic—of the Eocene, Oligocene, Miocene, and Pliocene, with a supplementary chapter, variously named, which includes the episode of the Glacial Epoch and leads us up to the age of history. There is indeed an introductory volume, called the Archæan, but it is as yet very imperfectly deciphered and veils rather than reveals the beginning of life on the earth.

In seeking to picture that period we must efface all the more prominent features of the existing continent. In the Secondary era there were no Pyrenees, no Carpathians, no Alps. Here and there, on the site of the last named, the expanse of the sea may possibly have been interrupted by a small rocky island, but even this is uncertain, for the great mountain chains of Europe had not yet arisen when the thick mass of marine clay which underlies London was deposited—that is, during the earlier ages of the Tertiary era. Thus neither the rivers nor the lakes nor even the continent of Europe itself existed. An archipelago of islands occupied its place, and the only tract which could possibly have laid claim to that title is now, to a very large extent, buried beneath the waves. A study of a geological map, coloured so as to indicate only the larger groups of formations, suggests that all parts of Europe may not have the same history. A line drawn from the Black to the North Sea, or from near the mouth of the Dniester to that of the Rhine, divides Europe into two very different parts—the north-eastern tinted with broad expanses of colour, the south-western like a patchwork quilt. A closer examination shows that the tint indicative of the oldest rocks—crystalline masses, the origin of which is still not seldom uncertain—covers almost the whole of Scandinavia, indeed nearly all the land region west of a line from St. Petersburg to Archangel. It reappears in the Scotch Highlands and in a more limited area of north-western Ireland. Their position on the map and the shallowness of the intervening seas suggest that all three regions are closely linked and are only fragments of a much greater land-mass. This, in geological ages earlier than that of the chalk, may have formed part of a continent or, at any rate, of a very large island. But most of it, like the fabled Atlantis, has sunk beneath the ocean. This for eighty or a hundred miles away from the western coast of Ireland—about as far as the hundred-fathom contour line—is comparatively shallow. That boundary, beyond which the Atlantic floor begins to descend more steeply to the great deeps separating America from Europe, may correspond generally with the watershed of this ancient land, the *débris* from which, brought by large rivers, played a most important part in the building of the British Isles. We shall presently come upon traces of these rivers which show that, though reduced in importance, they had not wholly disappeared in the Tertiary era. Possibly that land may have extended beyond the limits we have

mentioned and have curved round to the south-east as far as Brittany. If so, southern Cornwall and the Channel Islands are other relics, and it may have passed in a north-westerly direction into a broad isthmus linking the west of Europe to North America. It may also extend beneath those widespread deposits of later date which lie, with little disturbance and in orderly sequence from the Devonian to the Cretaceous inclusive, on the broad expanse of northern Russia, to which it may form a solid unmovable foundation at no profound depth. Be that as it may, this Brito-Scandinavian peninsula represents a land-mass of high antiquity and great importance in the past physical geography of Europe.

But, as the history of the region on the north-eastern side of the dividing line is less interesting, we shall restrict ourselves to the diversified area on the other, of which the British Isles now form an outpost. If one colour were employed to designate rocks of Jurassic and later ages—all with hardly an exception marine—and a second for those of earlier date, the map would represent an island-studded sea comparable with the region of the East or West Indies. A large part of this region during the Secondary era appears to have been slowly but almost continuously subsiding, so that from the end of the Triassic period onwards the islands gradually diminished in size and were probably at their smallest in the later part of the Cretaceous. The chalk, though we need not call it abyssal, is a deeper water deposit than any of the Jurassic limestones, and even more free than they from an admixture of land *débris*. But as the very small quantity present consists of minerals specially associated with old crystalline rocks, it indicates that land was even then in existence at no very remote distance, and was undergoing denudation. This deposit of pure white chalk is also comparatively limited in extent. The character of the outlying patches in Antrim and Mull suggests that its western boundary is near at hand. Its northern cannot have extended much beyond the southern end of Scandinavia. The contemporaneous white sands near Aix-la-Chapelle and the castellated sandstones through which the Elbe has carved a path in the Saxon Switzerland indicate proximity to its southern shore line. The deposits of this age in the Alps do not in the least resemble chalk and are often full of mud or sand, while the cream-coloured limestones of the Apennines, of Istria, and of Dalmatia, though very pure, are firm, solid, and much more like those Jurassic rocks which furnish some of our best building-stones, while to the

south of the old land-masses of Brittany and Auvergne, the chalk is represented by a limestone of ordinary character with some important differences in its fossil contents.

To return, however, to the geography of the more western part of Europe in later Secondary times. Probably, as already intimated, most of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, with the extreme south-west of England was then united to Scandinavia on the one hand and to the mass of ancient rocks forming Brittany with western Normandy on the other. Auvergne and the Cevennes mark the site of a hilly island separated from this by a comparatively narrow strait; western Spain and part of Portugal formed another; Sardinia and Corsica are probably monuments of a third; a fourth extended from the border of Belgium and France to Bohemia, including the Ardennes and the highland districts of central Germany, with the Vosges and the Schwarzwald. This last was composite in structure, the northern portion being added to it after the Carboniferous period, when the earth's crust was crumpled into great folds which run roughly east and west from the south of Ireland to Westphalia; a fifth is represented by European Turkey, and may be prolonged beneath the lowlands of Wallachia and Hungary. Others no doubt there were of small extent, but these it is needless to particularise. Here and there between the larger islands the sea-bed may have descended rather rapidly, and have formed basins as it does among the great island groups between the coasts of Asia and Australia, but, as a rule, the depth probably seldom exceeded a very few hundred fathoms and was often much less.

So ended the Secondary conditions—a group of scattered islands instead of a continent—and so began the Tertiary. But the earth's crust was now moving in an upward instead of a downward direction. In some parts of Europe, as in our own islands, and to a rather less extent in north-western France, the Cretaceous and Eocene systems are sharply separated, their rocks and faunas being very different, but in others the change is almost imperceptible. Thus, though the land was rising and the islands were enlarging their borders, though their ancient valleys were being again cleared from the mud accumulated during the ages of subsidence, and the rivers were beginning to carve themselves channels in the newly-exposed lowland zone on their way to the sea, yet the broader geographical features remained unchanged: Europe was still an archipelago of islands, some of them rising in bold

and lofty hills, but neither its grander mountain chains nor its greater river systems had as yet come into being.

The Eocene period was drawing to its end, when the birth throes of modern Europe began. These were felt with most intensity over a zone extending from the northern shores of the Iberian Peninsula to the western border of the Caspian, and probably far to the east of that sea; altogether perhaps not less than six thousand miles in length. A broad strip of the earth's crust was puckered, folded, and raised, where it could most readily yield, into mountain ranges. The dominant trend of these was nearly from east to west, but there are many complexities. The crust thus strained was not of equal strength throughout, for it was studded with harder masses where the old land surfaces had been; and it was influenced by the deeper ocean depressions, the most important of which have lingered on in the present Mediterranean. These movements began to produce marked effects in the Alpine region not long after the time when the sands were deposited which overlie the London clay and form the Surrey heaths. Here and there in that chain fossil marine shells indicative of the Bagshot epoch are found, raised to heights not less than ten thousand feet above sea-level. Though starts and sudden uplifts may have locally occurred—as the folded crust snapped and slid under the intolerable strain—the Alps were not, like Aladdin's palace, built in a night, for the process of mountain making, if measured by our estimates, is comparatively slow. But whenever land has risen out of reach of the waves, other carving tools of Nature—heat and cold, rain and rivers—begin their appointed task, and the destroyer treads on the heels of the builder. Very soon after the newest Tertiary estuarine beds of the Isle of Wight had been deposited, the Alps had become a mountain chain carved into peaks, furrowed by deep valleys, and drained by powerful rivers, which rolled their rock fragments into pebbles or ground them into sand.

The building of this chain is, however, a complicated story—more so than that of the Pyrenees or the Caucasus. Its connection with the Apennines and the Dalmatian ranges, the southward curving of the older rocks near the headwaters of the Inn, and again in yet more marked fashion round the western edge of the Piedmont plain, the superposition, which becomes more marked in that direction, of a series of folds trending from north-north-east to south-south-west, introduce so many complexities

that we must abstain from attempting to discuss them, and emphasise one fact only, which, for our present purpose, is of the highest importance, that even at this epoch the building of the Alps was not complete; for another set of movements had yet to come, which began towards the end of the Miocene period. During that period, though the first foldings had probably upreared the great mountain chains to not less than their present elevation, Europe even then was only beginning to be a continent, its surface was interrupted by shallow seas, and its great river systems, such as the Rhone, the Rhine, and the Danube, were either very incomplete or non-existent. North of the Alps a broad strait reached from west of Geneva to east of Vienna, linking a northern extension of the Gulf of Lyons to an Austrian sea, which was prolonged through Hungary to the Black and Caspian Seas; these with the Mediterranean being the last representatives of the great Eocene Ocean. During part of the time this strait may have been a marshy lowland—dotted with lagoons and lakes. But in any case the rivers which issued from the Alps could not follow their present courses, because they were interrupted by this sea, if not at the very foot of the mountains, at any rate after a short wandering over a lowland district. Europe had not yet become a continent, and in other parts considerable tracts, now dry land, were still covered with water.

The second set of movements, which reached a maximum in the western half of the Alps, probably affected a very much larger area in Europe. By these the Bernese Oberland was intensely folded and its peaks so much elevated that they almost rival those of the Pennines. The sandstones and gravels on its northern border were raised into foothills, which in the more central part attain some six thousand feet above sea-level. Beyond the limit of the more corrugated zone these movements thrust the hotter and more plastic material beneath the crust upwards and outwards, with the result that volcanoes broke forth on the central plateau of Auvergne, and on an inner zone south of the Carpathians. At the end of these disturbances, early in Pliocene ages, Europe had become a continent, though its margin was as yet incomplete and in many places the work of sculpture was only beginning.

The tale of this work, the carving of the lowlands into undulating hills and broad river valleys—the second great stage in the preparation for human history—can perhaps be made more

intelligible, by taking some of the chief European rivers as examples, and indicating their relation to the old highland masses and the new mountain chains. First for those of France—the Seine, like our own Thames, rises in rocks belonging to the Jurassic system, and cuts its way in succession through Cretaceous and earlier Tertiary deposits. Thus a very large part of its course must be later in date than these, and though the valley-cutting would begin somewhat earlier near its headwaters, we may assign that as a whole to Pliocene and subsequent times. The same may be said of the Garonne and its tributaries; the streams which feed these were flowing from the Pyrenees in Miocene times, but the lowland which they now traverse did not become dry land till after the beginning of the Pliocene. The Loire and its great tributary the Allier have a rather different story. Rising very far south in the old highlands of Auvergne, they pass northwards through them; so this part of their course must have been determined at a very early date, but not that below their junction. Here the Loire sweeps round in a huge curve from north to west, apparently turned aside at first by the Morvan uplands. Near Orleans, in Miocene times, it must have flowed into the sea, and as that retreated, must have wandered in pursuit over the dry bed to the present junction near Nantes. Those uplands, with the Côte d'Or and the Plateau of Langres, though apparently physical features of no very great importance, separate the basins of the Seine and of the Meuse from the valley of the Saône—they are in fact the watershed of this part of Europe. How it is that they have taken so leading a position becomes more intelligible when we examine a geological map. This shows that an underground connection almost certainly exists between Auvergne and the great highland mass including the Ardennes and the Vosges, which, during any subsequent earth movements, would tend to raise the rocks above it to a higher level than the more basin-shaped areas on either side.

The great rivers which carry away the drainage of the Alps are even more modern than the Loire. As the chain itself did not begin to exist till the end of the Eocene period, every part of their courses must be later than that, and their waters, all through the Miocene, were intercepted soon after leaving the mountains. Hence, as already intimated, it was impossible for them to follow their present paths till the second set of earth movements had produced their effects, or early in Pliocene times. Thus each of

the three rivers has a different history. The Rhone, at the present day, after leaving the Lake of Geneva, forces a path through a mountain barrier, where the Jura blends with the western Alps, and then flows through a lowland district, comparatively speaking, to Lyons, where it is joined by the Saône. When we look down upon their confluence from the neighbouring hills we are surprised to observe that the valley of the tributary is apparently the more important. Its direction is from north to south, which is the direction of the Rhone for the remainder of their course. So we conclude that the Saône is the older river. The commencement of its path, on the southern slope of the Vosges, may be very ancient, but its history, like that of so many others, practically began with Miocene times. During these the Saône was working out its channel as it ran southward through France to the Gulf of Lyons. So when the Rhone first emerged from the mountains it found in the lower Saône an outlet already prepared for its waters. Its example was followed by the Isère and the Durance, so that the whole of the Rhone below Lyons is only an enlargement and deepening of the ancient valley of the Saône.

According to the late Sir A. Ramsay, the Rhine has a different history. Though a new river, for it also cannot have come into existence earlier than the Rhone, we find it, at its noted gorge between Bingen and Bonn, cutting completely through the Taunus hills, part of one of the old highland masses, which ought to have diverted its course. These, however, in Miocene times were rather higher and had their own river system. One large stream, starting from a watershed between Bingen and Bonn, ran southward into the sea which then bordered the Alps, along a valley which has now become that of the middle Rhine. But during the second set of earth movements, the elevation of the bed of this sea, and of the adjoining Alpine zone, was associated with a relative depression in the region to the north, which gave a tilt in that direction to all this part of Europe. Thus the Rhine, as it issued from the mountains, found its path blocked by the southern buttresses of the Schwarzwald, along which it had to feel its way till it arrived at the mouth of the disused valley. Into this it poured, converting it into a long and narrow lake. The northern end of this may have continued to subside until its waters found an exit across the old watershed. The stream, plunging down the corresponding northern glen, would cut rapidly backwards, forming at first dangerous rapids like that

on its higher course above Laufenburg—rapids of which the noted Lurlei may be a remnant—till at last the barrier was severed, the lake emptied, and the gorge completed. Thus the Rhine, as a whole, is more modern than some of its tributaries. The Main, for instance, which joins it at Mayence, draining part of the Taunus and Odenwald highlands, and running through rocks which were above the sea in Secondary times, may represent the principal stream, rather than a feeder, of the river which in Miocene times flowed southward, and to which the Neckar may have been an important tributary.

The Moselle is a perplexing river, and may resemble the Rhine in having its lower and its upper parts of very different ages. It cuts obliquely, like the Meuse, through the old highland region of the Eifel and Ardennes, yet both rivers rise far to the south. The cradle of the Moselle is indeed in the south-western part of the Vosges, and thus may be very ancient, but as the river runs from south of Nancy till it approaches Trèves over the earlier Secondary strata (which were probably beneath the sea in the later part of that era) it cannot have marked out its present course till some part of the Tertiary. This is also true of the Meuse, except that its headwaters lie entirely among Secondary rocks, for it starts, like the Seine and the Saône, from the comparatively unimportant and modern upland of the Plateau de Langres, and seems at one time to have contemplated an alliance with the Moselle, for between Toul and Frouard their water-parting is low enough to be traversed by a canal. But the latter river on approaching Trèves, the former on leaving Sedan, find a path through the old highlands of the Ardennes—the one running with many windings to Coblenz, but following the general trend of the stratified rocks, the other crossing them more nearly at right angles. In this part of their course each probably repeats the story of the Rhine. The tilt of the continent which caused the last to seek a northern outlet may for a time have banked up the waters of the other two rivers in old valleys of the highland district, till each of them succeeded in cutting through a low watershed and opening a path for itself, along an ancient channel of discharge. The Elbe apparently has a less complex history. It starts from an ancient highland, that of Bohemia; has carved its way (in the Saxon Switzerland) through thick sandstones contemporary with our own Cretaceous rocks, and then, from the north of Dresden, follows a long and featureless path to the sea. Most of its present

course, like those of the other rivers, must have been carved out after the close of the Secondary era, and it, when studied more closely, suggests a change of action hardly less striking than we find in the more western streams. The scenery of the Saxon Switzerland is a representation in miniature of the cañon region of Western America. Castellated blocks of sandstone, such as the Lilienstein and Falkenstein, rise from an undulating plateau, out of which the Elbe has carved its present channel. Efface that for a moment, and those insulated blocks become the last remnants of an older and higher plateau, which was almost entirely destroyed by the ancient streams in their devious wanderings. That may well have been the work of pre-Pliocene ages; but when the land over the more central part of Europe began to sink, as we have already described, the outflowing water would quicken its pace, would seek a more direct channel, and would carve out the more sharply defined trough which forms the present course of the Elbe.

The Danube has a history not unlike that of the Rhone. It may be divided into three sections: from the source to Vienna, from that city to the Iron Gates, and from these to the Black Sea. The second and third cannot have existed till the close of the Miocene, for during most of it those districts were beneath a sea into which the Inn, the Mur, the Drave, and the Save were discharged on leaving the Alps. That also received a stream from the uplands of older Secondary rocks which rest on the eastern flanks of the Schwarzwald, as well as others from the ancient region of the Böhmerwald, and in the former the Danube has its beginning. The northward tilting of the zonal region on that side of the Alps forced the growing Danube to swing over to the same border of the Bavarian plain and hug the base of the Bohemian hills. But it soon became a great river, for the dry sea-bed now afforded a path to the Inn, and this more than doubled the volume of its waters. They escape through the gap between the Eastern Alps and the Little Carpathians to the lowlands of Hungary, which also had been emerging from the sea. Here, probably in consequence of the rising of the Carpathian chain, the tilt towards the north, which has hitherto affected the course of the rivers, is replaced by one in the opposite direction. To this we may refer that sudden southward bend of the Danube near Buda-Pesth and the inclination of the Drave and the Save towards the Bosnian frontier. Another highland barrier separates

the Hungarian lowland from the Roumanian plain (also a dry sea-bed), through which the Danube has forced a passage at the Iron Gates to begin the last stage of its course to the Black Sea.

The Italian rivers need not detain us long. None can be older than the Alps and the Apennines; and as the North Italian plain was a sea-bed in earlier Pliocene times, the greater part of the course of the Po must be yet more modern. In those times though the leading lines of this district were already sketched out, though the Alps, with their extension through Dalmatia and the Apennines defined a larger Adriatic, curiously reproducing the present land outline of Italy, the Mediterranean extended beyond its present borders both northward and southward. Thus the Po in the earlier ages of the Pliocene would be a comparatively insignificant river, less important than the Adige and even the Ticino.

We must not linger over the Iberian peninsula. Portugal and Spain meet on an ancient highland region extending from the southern margin of the Bay of Biscay to the neighbourhood of Seville. This, however, is not the watershed of the country; like the Ardennes and Taunus, it is severed by rivers which rise further inland among newer rocks, and follow courses which seem at first sight anomalous. The Douro, the Tagus, the Guadiana, and the Guadalquivir have their sources in the central plateau of Jurassic rocks, the first three crossing the highland on their way to the Atlantic, the last skirting its southern extremity. The Ebro, however, takes an opposite course, for it is born on the eastern slopes of the highlands, and runs in that direction to the Mediterranean. For an explanation of this we must go back to early Tertiary ages, when, as already said, only an elongated island rose from a wide expanse of waters. Then those great earth movements began which so profoundly modified the geography of Central and Southern Europe. The crust over this region was puckered, and rose up into huge complicated wrinkles, of which the Pyrenees were the most prominent, and these were prolonged by the Cantabrian chain to its junction with the old highland mass. Similar movements, with faulting and folding, helped to determine the Sierras which separate the Guadiana from the Guadalquivir on the one hand, and from the Tagus on the other, and the last again from the Douro. Thus the Ebro, with its eastward flow, is a consequence of the Pyrenees and of their westward extension; for these made a course in that direction im-

possible, and forced the water to seek the Mediterranean. The Garonne and Adour take the most of the drainage from the northern slopes of the Pyrenees to the Atlantic, but that seems almost fortuitous, so slight is the separation between one part of the former river and the Aude. But we must not forget one other important physical feature in Spanish geography—the Sierra Nevada, whose highest summit overtops that of the Pyrenees. As a mountain chain it is equally modern, being another result of that wrinkling of the crust which so profoundly affected the Mediterranean borderlands from the Atlas to the Alps.

Our own islands cannot be adequately discussed in the brief space that remains; enough to repeat that their northern parts are really continuous with the Scandinavian peninsula, and incorporate fragments of an almost continental region; that the southern portions retain more than traces of the great folding which produced the Ardennes and Taunus; and that the history of their lowland is in the main identical with that of north-western France, the story of the Thames being that of the Seine more briefly told. The Bristol, the St. George's, and the English Channels are each enlargements of hidden river valleys leading outward to the Atlantic: a submerged watershed marked by Islay and Jura parting the broad valley buried under the Irish Sea from another which took a northward course to that Ocean.

Thus the physical history of the western half of Europe resembles that of its nations. Its dominant features are comparatively modern, and are due to gradual development rather than to catastrophic change. But the old leavens and often determines the action of the new. It may be lost to sight, like that ancient upland which is concealed beneath the chalk of the Thames basin, and extends southwards under Kent to Sussex; but, just as this took a part in determining the dome-like elevation which was an essential condition in the valleys of the Weald, so these old highlands can never be ignored, and even when at last they are reduced to playing a subordinate part, they influence, guide, and modify the action of newer forces and the results of later movements.

NIGHTS AT PLAY.

THERE are various streets in London each of which is known to its frequenters as 'The Lane.' Mincing Lane is an example. What the portly merchant may call it a humble scribe dares not speculate; but his light-hearted clerk would stare at you in amazement if you referred to that place of tea otherwise than as 'The Lane.' So, too, Petticoat Lane is known to its votaries as 'The Lane.' There is little fear of misunderstanding. Petticoat Lane would be as grossly insulted by being confused with Mincing Lane as would Mincing Lane by being confused with Petticoat Lane. 'The Lane' in each case keeps itself to itself, and regards a rival claimant to the title with haughty disfavour. In the heart of London is another 'The Lane,' not to be identified with either of the other lanes—a lane with a long and varied history behind it; famous as the starting-point of the Great Plague; famous because Mr. Charles Booth has singled out some of its tributary streets for detailed description, house by house and room by room, that posterity may know to what depths London descended in the closing years of the nineteenth century; famous in the pages of Dickens, thrice famous in the annals of the stage. In 'The Lane' is a large club where we pass our nights at play.

The club is not bow-windowed. You do not ride past it on the roof of an omnibus and look enviously upon red-leathered arm-chairs or small tables suggestively covered with snowy linen. No stalwart porter in uniform whistles for hansoms to bear its *habitués* homeward. The latest gossip and the latest story do not fleet round its whispering-galleries. Two narrow houses tucked closely side by side shut out the sky as you walk past; a dusty inscription informs you that this is an institute and working-men's club; and the noise from within makes you aware that it is in working order. Over the door flares a lamp like those which hang outside public-houses, and its light shines upon a notice-board setting forth the manifold attractions of the place. Doubtless they are many and compelling; but the inscription is somewhat faded, and it seemed better, when first we saw it, to step inside and inquire than to puzzle out the writing in the chill evening wind out-

side. At the worst the casual visitor could but be requested to retire——

Clearly we had entered a coffee-bar. A long counter, loaded with steaming urns, thick mugs, plates, glasses, shut off the body of the room from shelves covered with good things. A brisk trade was being carried on—this coffee-bar seemed to do well. On the wall were numbers of notice-boards. 'Dramatic Society,' 'Harriers,' 'Lecture and Debate,' 'Football Club,' 'Federation Competitions'—such were the headings that caught our eyes and showed that the inscription outside was not calculated to deceive. From an adjoining room came the click of billiard-balls and a babel of talk. In front was a doorway leading—whither? The door had a ground-glass plate, across which mysterious shadows were fitting. Curiosity dragged us to and through that door. It led into a hall where boxing was in progress. A ring was roped off, two lads were pounding each other scientifically and effectually, the instructor watching them critically, other lads sitting round in perfect silence, while the timekeeper kept one eye on his watch and the other on the boxers. 'Time!' he called sharply. Instantly the two ran to their corners, fell into chairs, stretched out their legs, and flung their arms restfully over the ropes of the ring. Then the seconds took them in hand. The well-punched faces were dabbed with wet sponges, and cooled and dried by towels used as punkahs. 'Time!' was called again, the seconds scrambled out of the ring, the boxers shook hands (this being their last round), and commenced sparring once more. We seized the opportunity to look round. The ring was surrounded by working men and lads, some of whom, to judge by their appearance, had been boxing earlier. The instructor was a tall and slender man with long, wiry arms, and dark eyes that gleamed and blazed as he watched the sport. A dangerous man to offend, we decided. A stoutly built man in his shirt-sleeves was talking in low tones to the timekeeper, addressing him as 'Mr. President.' The door opened, and a young clergyman came in and whispered something to one of the bystanders, who nodded and went out. Then the clerical eye fell interrogatively upon us. An explanation on our part was clearly desirable, and we thought it best to throw ourselves on the mercy of the court and to confess that pure curiosity was our introduction. The plea was accepted. 'Wait a minute; I just want to see the instructor take on a new member, and then I shall be delighted to show you round the place. Let

me introduce you to our secretary.' Accordingly, the round being now ended and the combatants having disappeared to dress, we were introduced to the sturdy man who had been talking to the president. The secretary appeared to be an enthusiast, and launched out into the merits of the various champions of the district, past and present. Then a hush fell on all. The instructor had taken his place in a corner of the ring, close to where we were sitting, and was putting on the gloves. In the opposite corner was a powerful-looking young fellow, who purported to be a complete novice. The secretary looked glum. 'I've seen that chap before somewhere,' he muttered; '*he* ain't a novice. Tom,' he added, leaning over the ropes, 'keep your eyes open. That chap's warm, I reckon.' The instructor only winked, and 'Time!' was called. For three long minutes the instructor was in a succession of warm corners. The novice followed him all over the ring, lunging heavily, now at his head, now at his body, but in vain. Tom might have been a snake, so rapid and sinuous were his movements. His head and his body were everywhere but in the particular place where his opponent's fist happened to be. It was a splendid exhibition of self-defence, and also of self-control, for not once did he attempt to hit back. Nevertheless, he must have been glad when 'Time!' was called. From his corner he beckoned to the secretary, and we overheard the conversation. 'Look here, Charlie; I can't go on like this. He'll have me out by accident directly, and that won't do, you know.' 'Well, you know what to do, don't you? Put it on him. Give him the one-two, and I'll tell him to keep himself a bit quieter next time he has a lesson.' 'Time!' We expected that something was going to happen, and watched closely. The novice, as before, made a rush. The instructor leaned lightly to one side, and hit his man under the guard on the body. Instinctively the latter bowed forward, and received a smart blow right on the point of the chin. It was all over. The instructor, after one lightning glance, walked quietly back to his place. The novice stopped as if he had been shot, and then collapsed in a heap upon the floor. 'By Jove!' said a voice at our elbow, 'that's the neatest knock-out I ever saw.' Apparently no one was badly hurt, for the novice was already recovering consciousness under the expert care of the secretary.

With our clerical friend we left the hall. As we reached the door the first headings of the secretary's sermon to the repentant

novice fell upon our ears. 'Come and see the rest of the institute,' said the clergyman; and we accompanied him to see a tournament in various indoor games against a neighbouring club which was in progress. He took us first into the downstairs billiard-room, which opened out of the coffee-bar. Some forty or fifty men were crowded round the table, leaving barely enough room for the players, who were the objects of all eyes, to take their strokes. Both the players were surprisingly good, and the game was keenly contested. All good strokes and breaks were warmly applauded, and we were glad to notice that the applause was independent of the side represented. 'A hundred and seventy-seven plays a hundred and ninety-seven,' said the marker, as 'Plain' broke down at a difficult cannon. 'Spot' chalked his cue carefully, for two hundred up was the game. He made a shot, failed to secure the pocket, but scored a surprisingly fluky cannon.

When the jeers from his supporters had subsided the marker's voice sung out, 'Two to Spot.' Another stroke, and the red dropped quietly into a pocket. 'Five to Spot,' said the marker; and a rustle went round the room, for the balls were now beautifully situated for a long break. 'Ten to Spot,' as the red was again pocketed and a pretty cannon scored at the same time. 'Plain' put away his cue ostentatiously, as who should say, 'I know how to lose like a sportsman.' 'Twenty-one to Spot,' said the marker, and 'Spot' prepared to make the winning stroke. Alas! in the excitement of the moment he hit his ball a shade too high; it took a course quite different from that intended, hung trembling for a moment on the edge of a pocket, and then dropped in. 'Plain wins,' said the marker, and there was a burst of applause from the victorious club. 'One for the loser!' cried somebody, and everybody cheered and clapped, while the opponents shook hands cordially. Talk buzzed cheerfully, and the game was played all over again in conversation by the bystanders, till the next pair of players tossed a coin to see which should break the balls.

We watched the game for a time, but, on being reminded that there were other games in progress upstairs, accompanied our host to other quarters of the house to see what was going on there. Over the coffee-bar we found a second billiard-room, where some of the club members were playing a friendly game; and from this we passed into a large room furnished with chairs,

in various stages of repair and disrepair, and small square tables. In this room the club competition was in progress.

Chess, ye gods! Do working men play chess? They did here, and played it according to knowledge, it would seem, for the Muzio Gambit unfolded itself before our astonished eyes. We tore ourselves away, and paused to look on at a game of cribbage. Judging by the scoring-board it was a keenly contested game. One of the players, a delicate-looking lad, was counting. His face quivered with excitement as he glanced from his cards to his score, hastily calculating if he could snatch victory. 'Fifteen, two; fifteen, four; pair, six; and run of three—seven,' he said. An electric silence ran round the watching group. The player who had not yet pegged his score felt that something was wrong. Had he omitted to count anything? He scrutinised his cards again. 'Two, four, six, and three are seven,' he said with clouded brow, and marked his points. No one said a word, but we fancied that he would hear more of his arithmetic later on. For ourselves, we passed from table to table, keenly interested in the faces which we saw, and impressed both by the excitement which the match caused and by the courtesy extended by each club to each.

But time was slipping by, and with regret we prepared to depart. The regret was softened by a cordial invitation to come again. 'There is a concert here the day after to-morrow; perhaps you would like to come. It might interest you, as it will be given entirely by our own men.' We promised to come if possible.

It proved to be possible, though not altogether pleasant, for the rain came down in torrents. We did not anticipate a large assembly of men at that concert. They would probably prefer their own firesides, and had we not been idiots we should have done so too—that was our reflection as a passing hansom cab splattered us with mud from top to toe. But the expectation proved to be wide of the reality. The coffee-bar was crammed with members of the club, attended by their sweethearts and wives. 'A nice wet night, so we are sure of a good audience,' said our host, and explained, on being questioned, that the average working man does not possess a comfortable library or drawing-room to which to retire when work is done, that his courtship is usually carried on in the street, and that he is not always wanted at home when home consists of two rooms and a small family.

It began to dawn on us that wet weather might be a good thing for working-class concerts.

A tide of humanity flowed, we with it, into the small hall at the back of the house. There was a platform and there was a piano. At the piano presided a tired-looking girl of about eighteen, who was playing vigorously all the popular tunes and marches of the day, while the audience crowded noisily into the seats. The hall was small and ill ventilated, and the rain found means of entry through the roof, making a fine puddle on the middle of the stage. Later on unwary singers were surprised into forgetting their songs by the descent of cold drops upon the nape of the neck. All the men were smoking, and the air was thick. Our host took his place in the chair by a small table on the platform, armed with a small hammer. He rapped the table, called for order, and announced, 'Our old friend Mr. — will give us the first song of the evening.' There was applause as the singer in question made his way to the platform. A glass of something effervescing stood on the chairman's table; the singer wet his whistle and called to the pianist, 'Sweet Rosy O'Grady, miss.' Then he adjusted his hat on the back of his head and surveyed the audience, while the pianist played over a waltz refrain which we seemed to ourselves to have heard on barrel organs. The singer sung his verse and the chorus (in waltz time) concerning Miss Rosy O'Grady. When he had informed the audience how dearly he and the said Rosy loved one another, the chairman rapped the table with his hammer: 'This time, please!' he cried, and the whole audience took up the lilting chorus. It was evidently a favourite, and we trembled for the roof.

The song ended, the chairman called on somebody else, and the scene was repeated. Again the singer named his song; the pianist, whose memory must be extraordinary, played the refrain; the singer drank from the glass on the table, the chorus lifted the roof, and somebody else was called upon. So the evening proceeded. Occasionally the pianist was not familiar with the song selected. At such times the singer leaned over the piano and hummed into her ear. She listened, always with that tired, uninterested look, struck one or two chords, nodded, and accompanied the song with apparent ease.

Most of the songs were either sentimental or of the full-blooded patriotic variety. Now and then there was a comic man, and the type was unpleasant. His first two verses were usually

vulgar but harmless ; his third verse was disgustingly suggestive. During these fatal third verses we watched the faces of the audience. Some of the listeners were convulsed with laughter, some tittered shamefacedly ; nobody seemed indignant, though there were women and girls present. The pianist looked merely bored. The chairman's countenance was a study. Once he leaned forward at the end of a second verse, and said something to the singer, who looked surprised and brought his song to an abrupt conclusion, declining the *encore* which was vigorously demanded by a section of the audience. The chairman hastily called for the next song. Happily the comic element was small.

After a long hour of concert an interval was announced, and a rush was made to the coffee-bar. The chairman exchanged a few words with us, again extending an invitation, which we again accepted ; then he excused himself, as being responsible for the whole club, much of which had had to look after itself that evening. We screwed up our courage and entered into conversation with the pianist. Oh, yes, she did a good deal of this kind of thing in the winter, mostly at public-houses. No, it was not pleasant for girls, but her mother usually accompanied her, and, besides, it brought in money. She worked all day long at dress-making, to which she was apprenticed. She had learned to play the piano when father was alive, and now it came in handy. Yes, she got very tired of it sometimes ; most people did not seem to think that piano-playing was exhausting work. No, thank you, she would not have any coffee. Good-night, sir.

We stole away before the second part of the concert, the chorus of some well-known song tinkling faintly behind us. That afternoon we had listened to a violinist of European fame ; somehow the audience at St. James's Hall did not take their pleasure quite so heartily as the audience of The Lane that night !

Our next visit was timed to fall on a debating night. There was to be a discussion upon 'The State and the Liquor Traffic,' which promised sport. Under a misapprehension of the hour at which the meeting was to commence we arrived fully half an hour too early, and we were wondering how to occupy the unexpected interval when two boys, apparently some fifteen or sixteen years of age, entered the coffee-bar. We stared, for we had been under the impression that the club was reserved for men ; yet here were two youngsters looking as if the whole place belonged to them. Inquiries addressed to a bystander elicited the information that

there was a boys' club under the same roof, certain rooms at the top of the house being reserved for the 'Junior side.' Curiosity was piqued, and curiosity had to be satisfied. The bystander was impressed into service, and led us up certain winding and ill-lighted staircases till the evidence of our ears assured us that we were approaching the boys' domain. Our escort opened a door gingerly, and said, 'In here, sir'; then he suddenly fled. His flight was not a moment too early. A youth had perceived him, raised a yell, 'No seniors allowed up here!' and flung a well-aimed indiarubber-soled shoe at the departing figure. There was a buzz as of wasps in a disturbed nest, and half a dozen mischievous urchins swarmed out to protect the sanctity of their club. For a moment we wished that we were out of bowshot; but the tumult subsided as quickly as it had risen when the discovery was made that no senior, but only a harmless stranger, was entering the forbidden city. We found ourselves, we hardly knew how, in the possession or under the protection of a lad who appeared to hold a position of authority. 'It's like this, sir,' he explained; 'we aren't allowed in the seniors' rooms, and we take jolly good care that they don't come into ours.' Verily, we could believe it!

At first sight the Junior Club seemed to be a reproduction on a small scale of the men's club. There was a billiard-table, very undersized; there was a bagatelle-table, also undersized; there were tables with dominoes, draughts, and other games scattered all over them; there were chairs in various stages of disruption. Adroit questioning elicited the fact that there were differences as well as resemblances. We learned that no smoking or card playing was allowed on the junior side (our eyes and nose assuring us that the rule was kept); while, on the other hand, the juniors carried on carpentry in a way and with an energy unknown to the seniors. In proof of this we were proudly shown a book-case, a nest of cupboards, and other handiwork of the junior carpenters, made under the direction of the only senior whose presence was tolerated in the sacred junior precincts.

'What are those small cupboards for?' we asked. 'To keep our running things in,' we were told. 'Where do you run?' 'In the streets.' Curiosity was again aroused, and again satisfied. We learned that as soon as darkness fell about twenty boys would, on most evenings, crowd into a dressing-room (dressing-cupboard rather—it was only some eight feet long by three feet wide), change into running costume, and go for a two or three mile run

through the streets. The police did not interfere with the runners so long as the runners did not interfere with the traffic. The thing seemed incredible, and we were privately resolving to verify our information at more trustworthy sources when the door was flung open and ten or a dozen mud-bespattered figures in the last stages of panting and perspiration flocked into the dressing-room and sat down to rest awhile before dressing.

It began to dawn upon us that there seemed to be no one in charge of the place. There was no disorder, but there was no visible reason why disorder should not spring up, and we pursued our inquiries in this direction. 'Who looks after the juniors?' 'Oh! we look after ourselves when Mr. — is away. The chairman of the institute is too busy looking after the seniors and making them behave to give much time to us' (this with a smirking Pharisaism), 'and Mr. — can't get here every night, so we elect a committee, and the committee look after the rest.' 'But what happens if there's a row?' 'Well, the chairman comes up and gives us the choice of being turned out for the rest of the evening or of having one of the senior committee to look after us; and we go out. But there is very seldom any real noise, excepting if one of the footballs gets loose, and then it sometimes breaks a window. Then there is trouble.'

A hasty glance at our watch told us that it was time to descend to the debate; but we resolved to see more of this boys' club, for, candidly, we did not believe that the boys had yet been invented who could keep quiet for long by themselves—especially if there were footballs within reach.

In the room used for debating purposes five-and-twenty men were assembled, all smoking hard. A stranger presided, and just as we entered called upon the opener to deliver his address on 'The State and the Liquor Traffic.' The speaker was a working man, and we anticipated the usual teetotal clap-trap, with the old finale of 'champagne at night, real . . .,' but we were agreeably surprised. 'The difficulties caused by the liquor traffic, Mr. Chairman,' he began, 'have a long history behind them. The first brewer that we know of was Noah, who very soon discovered the evil character of the drink which he had invented.' By this we were all attention, and we listened in amazement to a long speech, always fluent, sometimes even eloquent, constantly humorous, ranging through many centuries, wandering all over the world, with apt Shakespearean quotations and police-court

statistics. Suddenly the speaker grappled with his main point. He dismissed the Russian Government spirit monopoly and the Scandinavian system with a few words of condemnation, and then he turned to prohibition. The State of Maine was evidently his earthly paradise, and prohibition his ideal law. Arguments and facts that might be thrust against him by subsequent speakers he anticipated and ridiculed, always ingeniously, if not always ingenuously. A fine peroration on the blessedness of a sober land brought a most remarkable speech to an end. The burst of cheering which greeted its close was a well-earned tribute to a splendid effort. We wondered if the debate would be maintained at this high level, but were hardly surprised to find that it was not. Nevertheless a high standard of intelligence was displayed. The pet fallacies in fact and reasoning which the opener had glided over, like the skater on ice that hardly bears him, were dragged to the light of day and well punished, but no one reached his level of oratory. We were chiefly impressed by the self-control of the speakers (not one of them said a thing about another which had better have been left unsaid—an unusual trait in a debating society), and by the intelligent grasp of the subject which most of the speakers possessed. We found that we had a good deal to think over when the evening was at an end, and we were on our homeward way, and we wondered whether the eminent King's Counsel who was the advertised lecturer for the next week would rival that Covent Garden porter in eloquence.

One night it chanced that we found ourselves almost alone in the club library with the man who opened the debate to which reference has been made. A friendly remark about the weather led naturally to a mild disquisition on politics and various other objects of interest. We gently diverted the conversation to the subject of the club, for we were anxious to discover a working man's point of view, and how the whole thing struck this particular contemporary. During the chat one or two of the younger members dropped in, and the talk became general. The impressions of their impressions which we gathered from this talk round the fire are a little difficult to put into connected form, partly because their mental attitude differed somewhat from our own, and partly because we had an uneasy feeling that some of them were either guarding their tongues in the presence of a comparative stranger, or else were unaccustomed to self-analysis.

However, we present here the general drift of the discussion, and the working man's point of view so far as we could grasp it.

There are, it would appear, two great forces working for evil in the social system. One is the public-house; the other, class division, with resulting antipathy, suspicion, and enmity. The public-house is essentially evil and incapable of reform, because all who are, directly or indirectly, interested in the liquor trade are necessarily interested in increasing the consumption of an injurious article. Moreover, man is a gregarious animal; also, the working man works hard and lives under depressing conditions. Therefore public-houses will continue to be patronised till some better place of meeting and recreation is provided. It would be best to close all public-houses by Act of Parliament, or at the least to grant local option. Failing this, there is a little hope in the new scheme of 'the reformed public-house,' and more in the multiplication of good working-men's clubs on temperance lines. To the so-called social clubs for working men where intoxicating liquor is sold no mercy should be shown. 'They are perfect hells. More men are ruined by them than by even the worst of the pubs. You go round to — Street next Sunday morning at about ten o'clock, and you'll see 'em reeling home.' At present it must be sadly confessed there is little hope of Parliament doing anything. 'What can you expect,' chimed in a young enthusiast, 'when the House of Lords is composed almost entirely of brewers?'

As to the other social evil—class divisions—that would hardly be stamped out in our time. Nevertheless, the signs of the future were hopeful. Such a club as this, where gentlemen and working men met on terms of equality, was capable of working miracles. At this point we set ourselves to find out the basis on which the club in question rested. Hitherto we had been content with a vague idea that it was a sort of parochial club, but we now learned that it expressed the philanthropic efforts of an influential section of one of the learned professions. Most of the leading men of the profession co-operated for this purpose and financed the institute, set the clergyman whom I had seen to organise it, induced younger men with more leisure to come and identify themselves with its working and welfare—in short, expressed the best side of themselves and of their profession in this concrete form. We did not investigate the matter to its depths, partly because there were other problems to be solved, and partly because the men

themselves did not seem absolutely clear as to all the details. So we turned the conversation back to the more general aspects of the social question, and here we discovered an interesting difference of opinion. The older men, before whose eyes the movement which, for want of a better term, may be called 'Social Christianity' had grown up, who had known either from experience or from their fathers the social conditions of the middle of last century, were deeply impressed by the new order of things. The younger men, who had grown up in the midst of things as they are, were inclined to take everything as a matter of course. They could not remember, for example, a time when there were no clubs and other meeting-grounds of rich and poor, and they regarded the social movement as being quite in the natural order of things. One or two fervent spirits had their eyes fixed on the future, and their ideas were a strange mixture of sensible desire for real progress and definite reforms with ill-digested rubbish gorged from foolish periodicals and swallowed uncritically. One or two were inclined to regard their wealthier friends as existing chiefly for the purpose of providing prizes for sports. This at once roused an older man's indignation. 'It's quite right and fair,' he said, 'that out of their riches they should give us a decent house for a club. But I don't hold with bleeding them. If we can't do something for ourselves, and if we can't follow sport for its own sake, it's a disgusting shame to us. No, what we want them to give us is a share of their education, and opportunities of widening our minds.'

Then the talk shifted to the recent history of 'The Lane.' 'It isn't what it used to be,' said someone. 'No,' interjected a man in the corner, who had been listening silently. 'It's changed above a bit. You remember the old round-house? Perhaps you don't, but it stood where the Buildings are now. There used to be a court off the street there, and none of the coppers would dare go down that court alone—no, nor yet in twos. I've seen it when a toff came strolling up "The Lane"; two of the chaps would begin fighting outside the court, and as likely as not the toff would stop and look on. Then a bit of a crowd would begin to collect round without his noticing it, and they'd edge him nearer and nearer to the court, and all of a sudden they'd hustle him in and drag him into one of the houses—and half an hour after he'd come out half-naked and robbed of every penny-piece! You don't see that now.' 'No, the County Council's changed all

that,' strikes in the young enthusiast with the views about the House of Lords. 'The County Council? Bah!' retorts somebody else, and in a moment the fat is in the fire. One side maintains with zeal that the Council is the working man's best friend, a model employer, the best representative of progress in London. Trams, model dwellings, the Works Department, and several quite inaccurate statistics are flung at other speakers' heads. John Burns is prominently to the front. . . . Then the other side gets a word in edgeways. 'The County Council? Look what they've done down Clare Market way! Pulled down half the houses, turned the people out of the other half as insanitary, and then let tenants go into 'em, and sent all the respectable people to go and crowd into Holborn as best they can. When they get up their new buildings, will they let 'em to you or me? Not much. Look what they charge down in Shoreditch! They'll let us go to Tottenham, that's what they'll do. . . .'

There is the making of a very pretty quarrel, but somebody remarks, 'Hullo! Plymouth Rocks beat the Rovers by eight goals to nil.' There is a rush to the football paper, and the regeneration of society is again postponed.

H. G. D. LATHAM.

PROVINCIAL LETTERS.

IX.—FROM OXFORD IN THE VACATION.

THE headline of my letter, most unfortunately for me, cannot fail to arouse memories of a great writer. The early Victorian poet and critic, Mr. Alaric A. Watts, once made it a charge against Charles Lamb that, on his own confession, he spent a week upon each of his essays in the 'London Magazine'; thereby, as Mr. Watts went on to point out, showing his fellowship with the Cockney school, whose members were never content to write off what they had to say and have done with it, but must always be elaborating their nothings as though they were of consequence. I need hardly, perhaps, assure my Editor that if, by taking thought and spending a week of weeks upon this letter, I could elaborate it into an Essay of Elia, I should consider the time and care well spent, and submit with resignation to the title of Cockney. But that being out of the question, I must say my say and have done with it. Only, having indiscreetly provoked remembrance of a delightful essay, I may perhaps be allowed to ask the reader who has dropped my letter to turn to it, whether he really does find there the special flavour of the University whose name it bears; for on that point I am myself sceptical. There are references in it to the Bodleian, and to Oriel and Christ Church, but so are there also to the 'tall trees of Christ's'; Cam is placed by Isis as Abana by Pharpar; we hear of sizars and bedmakers, names unknown to Oxford tradition; and the only scholars spoken of are Porson and G. D., both ornaments of the sister University. Moreover, in the first form of the essay there was an interesting passage in disparagement of the Milton manuscript at the Cambridge Trinity—a passage which, with humorous appreciation, the Vice-master quotes in the preface to his admirable facsimile. And even that is not all. When the essayist—writing, be it remembered, in vacation—says, 'I can rise at the chapel-bell, and dream that it rings for me,' he must have been thinking of Cambridge, where they maintain the curious paradox of a term in vacation, and not of Oxford, where logic is better taught. In fact, there can be no doubt that Elia was more at home in Cambridge than in Oxford;

and though, as one who by matriculation was of neither University, he attempted to give his affection to both, the attempt could not be successful. A man must be naturally Oxonian or Cantab, as he must be Platonist or Aristotelian; and Elia, if he had been free to choose, would have embraced the *alma mater* of his friends Wordsworth and Coleridge rather than the somewhat priggish dame who suckled Southey. And there are moments when I sympathise with his choice, just as once in very early childhood I wished to exchange my own mother for another child's mother who had red roses in her bonnet. For there are New Jerusalem glories about Cambridge to which we at Oxford are strangers.

Quite through the streets with silver sound
The stream of life doth go;

and Oxonians on their first visit have been known to mistake it for the Cam. But if my heart ever thus turns for a brief moment from 'my own kindly nurse,' the remorse at my impiety when I come to myself is on each occasion as great as in that disgraceful episode of childhood to which I have referred.

It was St. Giles's fair that took me to Oxford this vacation, or rather it was a visit to my old friend X, for which the fair was made an excuse. 'You cannot see Oxford in term-time,' wrote my friend; 'the modern spirit, in form of an undergraduate, is too much with us, and too exciting; we talk then of nothing but fours and eights and fives and elevens and other queer numerical combinations, the odd numbers being, as Plato says (*Laws* iv. 717), sacred to the gods above, the even to those below; but come in the vacation, when the mind is not so torpid, and I will show you things the like of which you never saw when you lived among them; and above all I will show you St. Giles's fair.' So I went, although I had seen St. Giles's fair more than once, and, what is more, heard it; for the recollection that remained with me was of forty steam organs playing like one, and all playing different tunes. But I had a great desire to see my venerable friend, and to see Oxford through his eyes; and when he retired to the Bodleian to make one of those annotations upon Herodotus which will carry his name down to posterity, I took Mr. Wells's pretty little book, and explored many colleges, with their halls and libraries, looked at all the pictures in the Taylor and Ashmolean galleries, and all the books in Mr. Blackwell's shop, and in the lucid intervals of the weather wandered through

the fine gardens of Worcester and New College and St. John's, or paced the Broad and the High. At such moments a visitor looks about him 'with the inner eye which is the bliss of solitude,' and, disregarding all the evidences of modern taste in tram-line or shop-front, peoples the streets and groves with the romantic figures of his own or a still more heroic past. When my imagination failed, as it did too quickly, I would draw upon my friend's reminiscences, which went back farther than, if directly asked, he was always ready to acknowledge. On one occasion he was deploring the extreme youth of modern Heads of Houses, though he agreed with me that the fault was mending. 'Why, not so long ago,' said he, 'we had Bulley at Magdalen, and Wayte at Trinity, and Cotton at Worcester, and Symons at Wadham (but you could hardly remember him), all mature men; but now, except the Warden at New College and my own President (my friend was of St. John's), there is not a single Head over eighty; while the Dean of Christ Church is so mere a boy that he actually walks about Oxford in a——' (what vestment the very reverend gentlemen was said to wear, a religious scruple prevents my repeating). 'But that is the way now,' he continued, 'in all the professions. If a man is not a bishop or a Cabinet minister by forty, he is on the shelf.' As my own age lies above that thus fixed for superannuation, this turn of the conversation left me uneasy, and, reverting to our original topic, I ventured to hint that youth, provided it was not extreme, had certain advantages even for high office. A head of a house, I suggested, might occasionally have to perform functions that could not as satisfactorily be performed by a figure-head. Seeing my friend's colour rise, I disclaimed any personal reference, and hastened to add that what was in my mind was a story I used to hear from an old friend, a scholar of Worcester, whose interviews with his aged Provost took always the same stereotyped form: 'Do you read the Holy Scriptures, Mr. B.? You know what Aristotle says: *πᾶσα τέχνη καὶ πᾶσα μέθοδος*. Good morning, Mr. B.' I allowed that the sight of Dr. Cotton's venerable piety should have been a liberal education in itself; but it was not a classical education.

On another occasion, as we were walking together in the Physic Garden (my friend has an aversion to perambulators, and so avoids the parks), I summoned courage to ask whether there were any odd characters still remaining in Oxford. I did not forget,

as I put the question, the amusing story told in Mr. Tuckwell's *Reminiscences* of the senior fellows of Corpus and Merton walking round Christ Church meadows and lamenting that the Originals of their younger days had vanished, when one of them (Dr. Griffith) said, 'Does it not occur to you, Dr. Frowd, that *you and I* are the "characters" of to-day?' I guessed that the *ethos* of Mr. Tuckwell's book would not have recommended it to my companion, and so risked the allusion. In reply he said, 'If by "odd characters" you mean persons around whom anecdotes crystallise, I am free to confess that I do not think there are. In fact, many good traditional stories are in danger of being lost through the want of suitable persons to whom they may attach themselves. The cycle of tales that collected round Dr. Jenkyns of Balliol descended in a fairly complete form upon Mr. Jowett, skipping a generation, as they will probably do again.' In thinking over more at leisure this dictum of my friend, it seems to me that it is only true within limits, for some stories in the Jowett cycle are concerned with his supposed indifference to theological exactness, and would not apply to Jenkyns—such a story, for instance, as the following, which was current among the undergraduates in my day. It had reached the Master's ears that Balliol men were not so successful in the examination in 'Rudiments of Religion' as in the classical schools, so that he determined to call up the next batch of candidates and catechise them himself in Bible history. 'Mr. Smith,' he is reported to have said, 'what prophet went up to heaven in a chariot of fire?' 'Elijah, sir.' 'It is disgraceful that a scholar of this college should be so ignorant. Mr. Jones?' 'Elijah, sir.' 'Mr. Brown?' 'Elijah, sir.' At this point the library boy entered, and to strike the undergraduates with shame he was appealed to. 'Tell these gentlemen what prophet went up to heaven in a chariot of fire.' 'Elijah, sir.' Then ensued a pause; and then: 'Well, gentlemen, perhaps it was Elijah.' It needs no arguing that a story of that type was not traditional; and of this peculiar appropriateness are the best of the Oxford stories. The Oxford oddities, indeed, might be ranked in a hierarchy. On the lowest plane are those whose peculiarities are simply described, such as old Archdeacon Clark, whose hardy annual, the sermon on 'The Unjust Steward,' was the cause of inextinguishable laughter to many generations of dons and men. In the next circle would come those whose alleged eccentricity was immortalised in one

story, like a certain registrar of the University, by whose bedside the angel Gabriel is said one morning to have appeared instead of his scout and intimated that the world would in some obscure but very real manner be benefited if the registrar would forgo his usual breakfast. And then above these again would rank those whose originality had all the variety of genius and created a whole cycle of stories. Of such variety in recent days was the Pater legend; and such, as I hear, are the legends which are gradually forming round the Professor of — and the — of —. In an entirely distinct category must be placed the effusions of wit such as embalm the memory of Henry Smith, or sallies of fun such as the clergy tell of Bishop Stubbs. A clergyman whom I met at dinner in Oxford proved to be a great admirer of this learned and humorous prelate, and regretted that his life was not to be written. He thought that the students at Cuddesdon might at any rate collect the floating traditions about him. I rejoined that this seemed a little unlikely to be done, as the stories I had heard could not be said to leave an episcopal impression. But here I found I had applied a match to powder. 'By an episcopal impression,' he said, 'you no doubt mean the sort of impression made by the present occupants of the bench of bishops. But allow me to remind you that the present type of bishop is simply and solely the creation of Samuel of Oxford; and Dr. Stubbs, who was (I need not remind you) a very learned historian, deliberately set himself to go behind that tradition—as far behind it, in fact, as Hugh of Lincoln, who was (you will allow) a much better model. The fact really was that Samuel himself created the type only for official occasions; but, being taken up by less rich natures—well, you know what Shakespeare says about the "dyer's hand." Happily, we have still an archbishop left who is not mealy-mouthed. By the way, can you tell me any authentic anecdotes of the great man?'

My memory is of the reticulated order, and anecdotes fall through the meshes; but I was able to contribute one to the proposed collection. It was the morning after a banquet, and a too solicitous friend who had sat by the bishop the evening before, happening to meet him in the street, asked whether he got home all right. The bishop looked slightly surprised at the question, but at once added with an apparently sudden gleam of comprehension, 'Oh, thank you, yes; it was only my boots that were tight.' To that I may add the disconcerting reply to a verger,

after a function in Chester Cathedral, who asked him, 'My lord, have you any further use for the mace?' 'No, take it away and put it in the rice-pudding'; and the equally disconcerting reply to the railway porter's question: 'How many articles, my lord!' 'Thirty-nine.' The latter may be an episcopal chestnut; but the following epigram I have seen with my own eyes written out in the bishop's large and beautiful hand:

To the 'l'état, c'est moi,'
Of Louis le roi
A parallel case I afford;
Something like it, you see,
May be said about me:
Am I not the diocesan bo(a)r(e)d?

I may mention here that the gentleman who was so original in his views on humour as a necessary episcopal quality told me, as an instance of Samuel of Oxford's appreciation of droll situations, that he was once overcome with laughter at the behaviour of an old vicar of St. Giles's; who, in his turn, was much mortified, and told the story to his common room as an instance of episcopal ill-breeding. The vicar, it must be explained, had a habit, that not infrequently comes to lonely bachelors, of saying aloud what he imagined he was only thinking. 'The bishop,' said the vicar, 'was very pleasant and polite, and asked if I would have evening service in my church. I said I was most willing, if the parishioners wished it; nay, I was delighted to oblige his lordship in any way (of course, I said in my heart, "I'll be hanged if I do"); and then—would you believe it?—the bishop burst out laughing.' It has occurred to me that not only in the University, but in the town of Oxford, which comes into such close and not always friendly touch with the University, there may have lived, and may still survive, many odd or eccentric persons who await a Tuckwell to preserve their memorials from perishing. I came by chance upon such a one during this visit—a hairdresser, whose boast it was that he never forgot a face. He was good enough to remember mine, and fixed my epoch and college with remarkable accuracy. On my congratulating him he sighed, and said that his gift was not always appreciated. 'The other day, sir,' said he, 'I saw in my shop a head that was very familiar; I passed in and out several times to reassure myself, while my young man was operating; and when the customer was paying me I said, "It is a long time since we have had the pleasure of seeing you here, sir." "What

do you mean?" said he. "Only that I remember your face distinctly, sir—I have a gift that way; and it is a long time since I have seen it." "Oh," he replied, "you Oxford people are always trying to make out you remember us; I am quite sure you don't remember me." "Well, sir," I said, "it's my word against yours; I say I do." "Well, if you remember me, what's my name?" And then, sir, said the hairdresser, 'I don't know how it was; but it came to me *here* (touching the back of his head): and I looked him in the face, and said, "You are — of —" (naming a very distinguished ornament of the judicial bench). And he said——'

But I have forgotten the fair. It is held, as all the county of Oxford knows, on the first Monday after St. Giles's day, in the broad space in front of St. John's College, which, as lord of the manor, receives a moderate rent from such owners of booths as squat upon the college property, while the city takes toll of the rest. The number of pitches this year was, as I learned from my host, greater than usual—he put the number of vans at 135; but, as I walked with him through the crowds of sightseers, I could not but feel that there was somehow a change in the spirit of the thing from the fair as I had seen it in younger days. Not that there were fewer shows, or fewer steam organs, or less gold and yellow paint—there was far more; I saw afterwards in the local paper that one carved figure on an organ had cost the showman as large a sum as 28*l.*; and everywhere, instead of the flaring petroleum of my youth, there was electric light. But I could not shake off the conviction that something was radically wrong—that the glory was departed; I seemed to detect a new spirit everywhere, materialistic, scientific, mechanical. I kept my uneasiness from my friend because I knew he would take it too much to heart. The fair exists, and has for three centuries existed, by the goodwill of St. John's College; and it would be painful, nay, impossible, to believe that so venerable an institution would tolerate any development that might prove inimical to Church or State. But I will set down two or three instances of the kind of change to which I refer, so that the reader can judge for himself. In old days one of the most interesting features of the fair was beyond all question the ghost, which, as an old Doctor of Divinity used to say, was a standing witness to the supernatural. The ghost was not remarkable in anything but its mere ghostly quality, for it belonged to an unhealthy boy, one 'poor Jim,' who died to

slow music in the presence of several angels, and was beyond a doubt better dead. But it was a ghost; and, as the learned divine said, it was *pro tanto* a witness to the supernatural. Then—as I am told—it became the fashion for the showman to preface his story by saying, ‘Ladies and Gemmen, there’s no such thing as spiritualism; it’s all an opcallusion.’ Such a cut at modern spiritualism was in itself unobjectionable; but it proved the thin end of the wedge of materialism. The temptation to explain phenomena by the theory of optical illusions was sure to spread, and now both ghosts and angels are no more. A second, and perhaps a more important, evidence of the growth of mechanical notions is seen in the disappearance of the strolling player. Not so many years ago a company would perform a scene from ‘Hamlet’ or ‘Othello’ or one of the approved comedies; or the clown ‘would make those laugh whose lungs were tickle o’ the sere’ by his extemporary wit; now the cinematograph has banished the player, and the clown contents himself with hitting and eluding a leather ball fixed to a pole that swings on a pivot. A third evidence may be found in what I must call the degradation of the mountebank. How delightful he was in old days with all his blague about pill or potion and his glib astrological patter! And when I saw a placard announcing ‘Professor Duval, character-delineator, gifted by Nature, acknowledged by press and public to be the master in this line of business, after a life-long study, advice on health and marriage under the planet of which you are born; the date of your birth is all that is required,’ I had the liveliest anticipations of enjoyment. But how rudely was I disappointed. The Professor was incapable of putting two sentences together; and his whole stock-in-trade was a large cupboard divided into pigeon-holes, from which he took a printed slip and gave it to his client.

Let me nevertheless admit that, although the fair by yielding to the mechanical spirit had lost some of its original brightness, there was no lack of merriment among the sight-seers; they, at least, were not mechanical, and so they supplied in human interest what the shows themselves lacked. I was sorry, though not surprised, to see none of the Heads of Houses present. It is good for us all now and then to get back to mother earth; and for no class of men is it so necessary as for those who live among ideas, like the fellows of Oxford colleges. This, with their usual wisdom, they recognise; and one of the most captivating sights of the fair

in old days was the sight of the venerable — of — throwing for cocoa-nuts. To anyone who was incautious enough to recognise him on such occasions he would say, 'The Romans, Sir, were an imperial people: and they knew the value of the Saturnalia.' Never, too, shall I forget the spectacle of a Professor of Ancient History upon the switch-back; being borne aloft and swept down again in a state of apparently frantic happiness. On that occasion our eyes met, and when he joined me subsequently he explained that, being engaged upon a description of Hannibal's passage of the Alps, he was endeavouring to gain local colour by a substitute for the exhilaration of high mountain-air. This year we had no professors. But the crowds were very human, the boys especially—from the sleek young gentleman in a Panama hat who spent a whole silver shilling in endeavouring to tumble a celluloid ball off a jet of water, to the ragamuffin who bore a peacock feather to worry his neighbours, and occasionally bought a halfpennyworth of fish-chips, ice-cream, or brandysnaps. On one stall I saw what seemed a tempting offer: 'Look, boys, down two pins and take one prize,' and I saw boy after boy look, as directed, and then turn away. On going near to investigate the cause, I discovered that the prizes were all clothes-brushes. As with the boys, so with the young men from the country: they wore their familiar air of knowingness beyond any chance of cozening. The young women from the country wore blue. Never have I seen such blues. Ethel outdid Florence in azure feats. I suspect the Coronation accounted for the prevailing tint. It accounted also for many mechanical figures of his Majesty, which turned and bowed to the music of 'The Honeysuckle and the Bee.' The war, too, lent its own interest to many of the exhibitions. One, at the door of which stood a gigantic figure of General Buller, exhibited the Spion Kop disaster. Others catered more successfully for the taste of the ordinary Englishman who prefers to win his battles. I was interested to watch the various methods adopted by showmen to attract the attention of the crowd. Some rang bells furiously; some used drum and cymbals; others an automatic trumpet; others again used bells, drum, cymbals, and trumpet together. More artistic managers accompanied their music with dancing—quite moral dancing. I mean there was no attempt to paint the face or tire the head; it was dancing by citizens for citizens, by mothers of families for mothers of families. Before other shows, again, the funny man would disport himself. But

the prelude outside, whatever its nature, had no discoverable relation to the particular entertainment within. That was always the same: some assortment of living pictures; the Coronation procession, or a stag-hunting, or the eruption of a volcano, or domestic scenes. And that brings me to speak of the one feature of the fair that was distasteful. My host informed me that his college had taken the greatest pains to secure that the whole fair should be as moral as a mediæval church ale, and had even examined all the moving pictures that were to be exhibited. The sign of this anxiety was evident in many parts of the fair, where shows were advertised as 'moral' or as 'fit for ladies.' But whether the show that I happened to choose had escaped the censor, or was not under the ægis of the college, I cannot say; the fact remains that the 'domestic scenes' exhibited were neither 'moral' nor 'fit for ladies.'

What to me, however, was the cream of the fair I have not yet mentioned; it was the one element, besides the inevitable merry-go-round and shooting-gallery, that recalled what the fair used to be in its palmy days; I mean the cheap-jack. We are still a nation of shopkeepers and shop-frequenter; we buy and sell; and we like to buy cheap; so the cheap-jack appeals to our most intimate feelings. At Oxford he was represented in all his manifold variety. There was the chafferer who sold inestimable stones, unvalued jewels, in closed parcels, after opening a few carefully selected specimens. There was the blander cheat who handed his watch-chains round for inspection. And there was the wholesale swindler, who bludgeoned your imagination and befogged your intellect by the accumulated magnificence of his offers. 'Here is a sword-stick priced five francs at the Paris Exhibition; I throw in a ring, hall-marked gold—g-o-l-d, gold—and I give a chain as a present. Now, who says a shilling for the lot?' The remarkable thing was that this gentleman seemed to find fewer customers than the rest. The sober sense of Englishmen was disturbed by such public-spirited offers, and suspected a trick, as well it might. It is a fact well known that when, for a bet, a man offered half-sovereigns for shillings for a quarter of an hour on Waterloo Bridge not a single person availed himself of the offer.

There is one joy of Oxford in the vacation upon which I have not touched. Oxford, as the wit said, is a delightful place to get out of. And so it is. On all sides lie objects of interest that tempt the feet of the curious inquirer, whether he drives the

cushioned wheel or practises the almost lost art of walking. Certainly, the bicycle is not to be despised, if it were only for the distances that it brings within range. Thus, on this visit, not only did I pay my respects to Stanton Harcourt and Yarnton, with its interesting old church and beautiful Jacobean manor-house, which Mr. Bodley has restored and adorned with gazebos and what not, in the most correct taste, but farther west to Witney and Burford, that most beautiful old town on the edge of the Cotswolds; south-west to Faringdon and the vale of Berks, where it was pleasant to see what care is taken of the White Horse; and east to Haseley and Chalgrove and Ewelme, of which it may be said that the place is as beautiful as its name.

URBANUS SYLVAN.

THE FOUR FEATHERS.¹

BY A. E. W. MASON.

CHAPTER XXIX.

COLONEL TRENCH ASSUMES A KNOWLEDGE OF CHEMISTRY.

'THREE more days.' Both men fell asleep with these words upon their lips. But the next morning Trench waked up and complained of a fever; and the fever rapidly gained upon him, so that before the afternoon had come he was light-headed, and those services which he had performed for Feversham, Feversham had now to perform for him. The thousand nights of the House of Stone had done their work. But it was no mere coincidence that Trench should suddenly be struck down by them at the very moment when the door of his prison was opening. The great revulsion of joy which had come to him so unexpectedly had been too much for his exhausted body. The actual prospect of escape had been the crowning trial which he could not endure.

'In a few days he will be well,' said Feversham. 'It is nothing.'

'It is *Umm Sabbah*,' answered Ibrahim, shaking his head, the terrible typhus fever which had struck down so many in that infected gaol and carried them off upon the seventh day.

Feversham refused to believe. 'It is nothing,' he repeated in a sort of passionate obstinacy; but in his mind there ran another question: 'Will the men with the camels wait?' Each day as he went to the Nile he saw Abou Fatma in the blue robe at his post; each day the man made his sign, and each day Feversham gave no answer. Meanwhile with Ibrahim's help he nursed Trench. The boy came daily to the prison with food; he was sent out to buy tamarinds, dates, and roots, out of which Ibrahim brewed cooling draughts. Together they carried Trench from shade to shade as the sun moved across the zareeba. Some further assistance was provided for the starving family of Idris, and the forty-pound

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chains which Trench wore were consequently removed. He was given vegetable marrow soaked in salt water, his mouth was packed with butter, his body anointed and wrapped close in camel-cloths. The fever took its course, and on the seventh day Ibrahim said :

‘This is the last. To-night he will die.’

‘No,’ replied Feversham ; ‘that is impossible. “In his own parish,” he said, “beneath the trees he knew.” Not here, no.’ And he spoke again with a passionate obstinacy. He was no longer thinking of the man in the blue robe outside the prison walls, or of the chances of escape. The fear that the third feather would never be brought back to Ethne, that she would never have the opportunity to take back the fourth of her own free will, no longer troubled him. Even that great hope of ‘the afterwards’ was for the moment banished from his mind. He thought only of Trench and the few awkward words he had spoken in the corner of the zareeba on the first night when they lay side by side under the sky. ‘No,’ he repeated, ‘he must not die here.’ And through all that day and night he watched by Trench’s side the long hard battle between life and death. At one moment it seemed that the three years of the House of Stone must win the victory, at another that Trench’s strong constitution and wiry frame would get the better of the three years.

For that night, at all events, they did, and the struggle was prolonged. The dangerous seventh day was passed. Even Ibrahim began to gain hope ; and on the thirteenth day Trench slept and did not ramble during his sleep, and when he waked it was with a clear head. He found himself alone, and so swathed in camel-cloths that he could not stir ; but the heat of the day was past, and the shadow of the House of Stone lay black upon the sand of the zareeba. He had not any wish to stir, and he lay wondering idly how long he had been ill. While he wondered he heard the shouts of the gaolers, the cries of the prisoners outside the zareeba and in the direction of the river. The gate was opened, and the prisoners flocked in. Feversham was among them, and he walked straight to Trench’s corner.

‘Thank God!’ he cried. ‘I would not have left you, but I was compelled. We have been unloading boats all day.’ And he dropped in fatigue by Trench’s side.

‘How long have I lain ill?’ asked Trench.

‘Thirteen days.’

'It will be a month before I can travel. You must go, Feversham. You must leave me here and go while you still can. Perhaps when you come to Assuan you can do something for me. I could not move at present. You will go to-morrow?'

'No, I should not go without you in any case,' answered Feversham. 'As it is, it is too late.'

'Too late?' Trench repeated. He took in the meaning of the words but slowly; he was almost reluctant to be disturbed by their mere sound; he wished just to lie idle for a long time in the cool of the sunset. But gradually the import of what Feversham had said forced itself into his mind.

'Too late? Then the man in the blue gown has gone?'

'Yes. He spoke to me yesterday by the river. The camel men would wait no longer. They were afraid of detection, and meant to return whether we went with them or not.'

'You should have gone with them,' said Trench. For himself he did not at that moment care whether he was to live in the prison all his life, so long as he was allowed quietly to lie where he was for a long time; and it was without any expression of despair that he added, 'So our one chance is lost.'

'No, deferred,' replied Feversham. 'The man who watched by the river in the blue gown brought me paper, a pen, and some wood-soot mixed with water. He was able to drop them by my side as I lay upon the ground. I hid them beneath my jibbeh, and last night—there was a moon last night—I wrote to a Greek merchant who keeps a *café* at Wadi Halfa. I gave him the letter this afternoon, and he has gone. He will deliver it and receive money. In six months, in a year at the latest, he will be back in Omdurman.'

'Very likely,' said Trench. 'He will ask for another letter, so that he may receive more money, and again he will say that in six months or a year he will be back in Omdurman. I know these people.'

'You do not know Abou Fatma. He was Gordon's servant over there, before Khartum fell; he has been mine since. He came with me to Obak, and waited there while I went down to Berber. He risked his life in coming to Omdurman at all. Within six months he will be back, you may be very sure.'

Trench did not continue the argument. He let his eyes wander about the enclosure, and they settled at last upon a pile of newly-turned earth which lay in one corner.

'What are they digging?' he asked.

'A well,' answered Feversham.

'A well?' said Trench fretfully, 'and so close to the Nile! Why? What's the object?'

'I don't know,' said Feversham. Indeed he did not know, but he suspected. With a great fear at his heart he suspected the reason why the well was being dug in the enclosure of the prison. He would not, however, reveal his suspicion until his companion was strong enough to bear the disappointment which belief in it would entail. But within a few days his suspicion was proved true. It was openly announced that a high wall was to be built about the House of Stone. Too many prisoners had escaped in their fetters along the Nile bank. Henceforward they were to be kept from year's beginning to year's end within the wall. The prisoners built it themselves of mud-bricks dried in the sun. Feversham took his share in the work, and Trench, as soon almost as he could stand, was joined with him.

'Here's our last hope gone,' he said; and though Feversham did not openly agree, in spite of himself his heart began to consent.

They piled the bricks one upon the other and mortised them. Each day the wall rose a foot. With their own hands they closed themselves in. Twelve feet high the wall stood when they had finished it—twelve feet high, and smooth and strong. There was never a projection from its surface on which a foot could rest; it could not be broken through in a night. Trench and Feversham contemplated it in despair. The very palm trees of Khartum were now hidden from their eyes. A square of bright blue by day, a square of dark blue by night, jewelled with points of silver and flashing gold, limited their world. Trench covered his face with his hands.

'I daren't look at it,' he said in a broken voice. 'We have been building our own coffin, Feversham, that's the truth of it.' And then he cast up his arms and cried aloud, 'Will they never come up the Nile, the gunboats and the soldiers? Have they forgotten us in England? Good God! have they forgotten us?'

'Hush!' replied Feversham. 'We shall find a way of escape, never fear. We must wait six months. Well, we have both of us waited years. Six months: what are they?'

But, though he spoke stoutly for his comrade's sake, his own heart sank within him.

The details of their life during the six months are not to be dwelt upon. In that pestilent enclosure only the myriad vermin lived lives of comfort. No news filtered in from the world outside. They fed upon their own thoughts, so that the sight of a lizard upon the wall became an occasion for excitement. They were stung by scorpions at night; they were at times flogged by their gaolers by day. They lived at the mercy of the whims of Idris-es-Saier and that peculiar spirit Nebbi Khiddr, who always reported against them to the Khalifa just at the moment when Idris was most in need of money for his starving family. Religious men were sent by the Khalifa to convert them to the only true religion; and indeed the long theological disputations in the enclosure became events to which both men looked forward with eagerness. At one time they would be freed from the heavier shackles and allowed to sleep in the open; at another, without reason, those privileges would be withdrawn, and they struggled for their lives within the House of Stone.

The six months came to an end. The seventh began; a fortnight of it passed, and the boy who brought Feversham food could never cheer their hearts with word that Abou Fatma had come back.

'He will never come,' said Trench in despair.

'Surely he will—if he is alive,' said Feversham. 'But is he alive?'

The seventh month passed, and one morning at the beginning of the eighth there came two of the Khalifa's bodyguard to the prison, who talked with Idris. Idris advanced to the two prisoners.

'Verily God is good to you, you men from the bad world,' he said. 'You are to look upon the countenance of the Khalifa. How happy you should be!'

Trench and Feversham rose up from the ground in no very happy frame of mind. 'What does he want with us? Is this the end?' The questions started up clear in both their minds. They followed the two guards out through the door and up the street towards the Khalifa's house.

'Does it mean death?' said Feversham.

Trench shrugged his shoulders and laughed sourly. 'It is on the cards that Nebbi Khiddr has suggested something of the kind,' he said.

They were led into the great parade-ground before the mosque, and thence into the Khalifa's house, where another

white man sat in attendance upon the threshold. Within the Khalifa was seated upon an angareb, and a grey-bearded Greek stood beside him. The Khalifa remarked to them that they were both to be employed upon the manufacture of gunpowder, with which the armies of the Turks were shortly to be overwhelmed.

Feversham was on the point of disclaiming any knowledge of the process, but before he could open his lips he heard Trench declaring in fluent Arabic that there was nothing connected with gunpowder which he did not know about; and upon his words they were both told they were to be employed at the powder factory under the supervision of the Greek.

For that Greek both prisoners will entertain a regard to their dying day. There was in the world a true Samaritan. It was out of sheer pity, knowing the two men to be herded in the House of Stone, that he suggested to the Khalifa their employment, and the same pity taught him to cover the deficiencies of their knowledge.

'I know nothing whatever about the making of gunpowder except that crystals are used,' said Trench. 'But we shall leave the prison each day, and that is something, though we return each night. Who knows when a chance of escape may come!'

The powder factory lay in the northward part of the town, and on the bank of the Nile just beyond the limits of the great mud wall and at the back of the slave market. Every morning the two prisoners were let out from the prison door, they tramped along the river bank on the outside of the town wall, and came into the powder factory past the storehouses of the Khalifa's bodyguard. Every evening they went back by the same road to the House of Stone. No guard was sent with them, since flight seemed impossible, and each journey that they made they looked anxiously for the man in the blue robe. But the months passed, and May brought with it the summer.

'Something has happened to Abou Fatma,' said Feversham. 'He has been caught at Berber perhaps. In some way he has been delayed.'

'He will not come,' said Trench.

Feversham could no longer pretend to hope that he would. He did not know of a sword thrust received by Abou Fatma, as he fled through Berber on his return from Omdurman. He had been recognised by one of his old gaolers in that town, and had got cheaply off with the one thrust in his thigh. From that

wound he had through the greater part of this year been slowly recovering in the hospital of Assouan. But though Feversham heard nothing of Abou Fatma, towards the end of May he received news that others were working for his escape. As Trench and he passed in the dusk of one evening between the storehouses and the town wall, a man in the shadow of one of the narrow alleys which opened from the storehouses whispered to them to stop. Trench knelt down upon the ground and examined his foot as though a stone had cut it, and as he kneeled the man walked past them and dropped a slip of paper at their feet. He was a Suakin merchant, who had a booth in the grain market of Omdurman. Trench picked up the paper, hid it in his hand and limped on, with Feversham at his side. There was no address or name upon the outside, and as soon as they had left the houses behind, and had only the wall upon their right and the Nile upon their left, Trench sat down again. There was a crowd about the water's edge, men passed up and down between the crowd and them. Trench took his foot into his lap and examined the sole. But at the same time he unfolded the paper in the hollow of his hand and read the contents aloud. He could hardly read them, his voice so trembled. Feversham could hardly hear them, the blood so sang in his ears.

'A man will bring to you a box of matches. When he comes trust him.—Sutch.' And he asked, 'Who is Sutch?'

'A great friend of mine,' said Feversham. 'He is in Egypt, then! Does he say where?'

'No; but since Mohamed Ali, the grain merchant, dropped the paper, we may be sure he is at Suakin. A man with a box of matches! Think, we may meet him to-night!'

But it was a month later when, in the evening, an Arab pushed past them on the river bank and said, 'I am the man with the matches. To-morrow by the storehouse at this hour.' And as he walked past them he dropped a box of coloured matches on the ground. Feversham stooped instantly.

'Don't touch them,' said Trench, and he pressed the box into the ground with his foot and walked on.

'Sutch!' exclaimed Feversham. 'So he comes to our help! How did he know that I was here?'

Trench fairly shook with excitement as he walked. He did not speak of the great new hope which so suddenly came to them, for he dared not. He tried even to pretend to himself that no

message at all had come. He was afraid to let his mind dwell upon the subject. Both men slept brokenly that night, and every time they waked it was with a dim consciousness that something great and wonderful had happened. Feversham, as he lay upon his back and gazed upwards at the stars, had a fancy that he had fallen asleep in the garden of Broad Place, on the Surrey Hills, and that he had but to raise his head to see the dark pines upon his right hand and his left, and but to look behind to see the gables of the house against the sky. He fell asleep towards dawn, and within an hour was waked up by a violent shaking. He saw Trench bending over him with a great fear on his face.

'Suppose they keep us in the prison to-day,' he whispered in a shaking voice, plucking at Feversham. 'It has just occurred to me! Suppose they did that!'

'Why should they?' answered Feversham, but the same fear caught hold of him, and they sat dreading the appearance of Idris lest he should have some such new order to deliver. But Idris crossed the yard and unbolted the prison door without a look at them. Fighting, screaming, jammed together in the entrance, pulled back, thrust forward, the captives struggled out into the air, and among them was one who ran, foaming at the mouth, and dashed his head against the wall.

'He is mad!' said Trench, as the gaolers secured him, and since Trench was unmanned that morning he began to speak rapidly and almost with incoherence. 'That's what I have feared, Feversham, that I should go mad. To die, even here, one could put up with that without overmuch regret; but to go mad!' and he shivered. 'If this man with the matches proves false to us, Feversham, I shall be near to it—very near to it. A man one day, a raving, foaming idiot the next—a thing to be put away out of sight, out of hearing. God, but that's horrible!' and he dropped his head between his hands, and dared not look up until Idris crossed to them and bade them go about their work. What work they did in the factory that day neither knew. They were only aware that the hours passed with an extraordinary slowness, but the evening came at last.

'Among the storehouses,' said Trench. They dived into the first alley which they passed, and turning a corner saw the man who had brought the matches.

'I am Abdul Kader,' he began at once. 'I have come to

arrange for your escape. But at present flight is impossible,' and Trench swayed upon his feet as he heard the word.

'Impossible?' asked Feversham.

'Yes. I brought three camels to Omdurman, of which two have died. The Effendi at Suakin gave me money, but not enough. I could not arrange for relays, but if you will give me a letter to the Effendi telling him to give me two hundred pounds, then I will have everything ready and come again within three months.'

Trench turned his back so that his companion might not see his face. All his spirit had gone from him at this last stroke of fortune. The truth was clear to him, appallingly clear. Abdul Kader was not going to risk his life; he would be the shuttle going backwards and forwards between Omdurman and Suakin as long as Feversham cared to write letters and Sutch to pay money. But the shuttle would do no weaving.

'I have nothing with which to write,' said Feversham, and Abdul Kader produced them.

'Be quick,' he said. 'Write quickly, lest we be discovered.' And Feversham wrote; but though he wrote as Abdul suggested, the futility of his writing was as clear to him as to Trench.

'There is the letter,' he said, and he handed it to Abdul, and, taking Trench by the arm, walked without another word away.

They passed out of the alley and came again to the great mud wall. It was sunset. To their left the river gleamed with changing lights—here it ran the colour of an olive, there rose pink, and here again a brilliant green; above their heads the stars were coming out, in the east it was already dusk; and behind them in the town drums were beginning to beat with their barbaric monotone. Both men walked with their chins sunk upon their breasts, their eyes upon the ground. They had come to the end of hope, they were possessed with a lethargy of despair. Feversham thought not at all of the pine trees on the Surrey Hills, nor did Trench have any dread that something in his head would snap and that which made him man be reft from him. They walked slowly, as though their fetters had grown ten times their weight, and without a word. So stricken, indeed, were they that an Arab turned and kept pace beside them, and neither noticed his presence. In a few moments the Arab spoke:

'The camels are ready in the desert, ten miles to the west.'

But he spoke in so low a voice, and those to whom he spoke were so absorbed in misery, that the words passed unheard. He repeated them, and Feversham looked up. Quite slowly their meaning broke in on Feversham's mind; quite slowly he recognised the man who uttered them.

'Abou Fatma!' he said.

'Hoosh!' returned Abou Fatma, 'the camels are ready.'

'Now?'

'Now.'

Trench leaned against the wall with his eyes closed, and the face of a sick man. It seemed that he would swoon, and Feversham took him by the arm.

'Is it true?' Trench asked, faintly; and before Feversham could answer Abou Fatma went on:

'Walk forward very slowly. Before you reach the end of the wall it will be dusk. Draw your cloaks over your heads, wrap these rags about your chains, so that they do not rattle. Then turn and come back, go close to the water beyond the storehouses. I will be there with a man to remove your chains. But keep your faces well covered, and do not stop. He will think you slaves.'

With that he passed some rags to them, holding his hands behind his back, while they stood close to him. Then he turned and hurried back. Very slowly Feversham and Trench walked forward in the direction of the prison, the dusk crept across the river, mounted the long slope of sand, enveloped them. They sat down and quickly wrapped the rags about their chains and secured them there. From the west the colours of the sunset had altogether faded, the darkness gathered quickly about them. They turned and walked back along the road they had come. The drums were more numerous now, and above the wall there rose a glare of light. By the time they had reached the water's edge opposite the storehouses it was dark. Abou Fatma was already waiting with his blacksmith. The chains were knocked off without a word spoken.

'Come,' said Abou. 'There will be no moon to-night. How long before they discover you are gone?'

'Who knows? Perhaps already Idris has missed us. Perhaps he will not till morning. There are many prisoners.'

They ran up the slope of sand, between the quarters of the tribes, across the narrow width of the city, through the cemetery.

On the far side of the cemetery stood a disused house; a man rose up in the doorway as they approached, and went in.

'Wait here,' said Abou Fatma, and he too went into the house. In a moment both men came back, and each one led a camel and made it kneel.

'Mount,' said Abou Fatma. 'Bring its head round and hold it as you mount.'

'I know the trick,' said Trench.

Feversham climbed up behind him, the two Arabs mounted the second camel.

'Ten miles to the west,' said Abou Fatma, and he struck the camel on the flanks.

Behind them the glare of the lights dwindled, the tapping of the drums diminished.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAST OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS.

THE wind blew keen and cold from the north. The camels, freshened by it, trotted out at their fastest pace.

'Quicker,' said Trench, between his teeth. 'Already Idris may have missed us.'

'Even if he has,' replied Feversham, 'it will take time to get men together for a pursuit, and those men must fetch their camels, and already it is dark.'

But although he spoke hopefully he turned his head again and again towards the glare of light above Omdurman. He could no longer hear the tapping of the drums, that was some consolation. But he was in a country of silence, where men could journey swiftly and yet make no noise. There would be no sound of galloping horses to warn him that pursuit was at his heels. Even at that moment the Ansar soldiers might be riding within thirty paces of them, and Feversham strained his eyes backwards into the darkness and expected the glimmer of a white turban. Trench, however, never turned his head. He rode with his teeth set, looking forward. Yet fear was no less strong in him than in Feversham. Indeed, it was stronger, for he did not look back towards Omdurman because he did not dare; and though his eyes were fixed directly in front of him, the things which he really saw were the long, narrow streets of the town behind him,

the dotted fires at the corners of the streets, and men running hither and thither among the houses, making their quick search for the two prisoners escaped from the House of Stone.

Once his attention was diverted by a word from Feversham, and he answered without turning his head :

‘What is it?’

‘I no longer see the fires of Omdurman.’

‘The golden blot, eh, very low down?’ Trench answered in an abstracted voice. Feversham did not ask him to explain what his allusion meant, nor could Trench have disclosed why he had spoken it; the words had come back to him suddenly with a feeling that it was somehow appropriate that the vision which was the last thing to meet Feversham’s eyes as he set out upon his mission he should see again now that that mission was accomplished. They spoke no more until two figures rose out of the darkness in front of them, at the very feet of their camels, and Abou Fatma cried in a low voice :

‘Instanna!’

They halted their camels and made them kneel.

‘The new camels are here?’ asked Abou Fatma, and two of the men disappeared for a few minutes and brought four camels up. Meanwhile the saddles were unfastened and removed from the camels Trench and his companion had ridden out of Omdurman.

‘They are good camels?’ asked Feversham, as he helped to fix the saddles upon the fresh ones.

‘Of the Anafi breed,’ answered Abou Fatma. ‘Quick! Quick!’ and he looked anxiously to the East and listened.

‘The arms?’ said Trench, ‘You have them? Where are they?’ and he bent his body and searched the ground for them.

‘In a moment,’ said Abou Fatma, but it seemed that Trench could hardly wait for that moment to arrive. He showed even more anxiety to handle the weapons than he had shown fear that he would be overtaken.

‘There is ammunition?’ he asked feverishly.

‘Yes, yes,’ replied Abou Fatma, ‘ammunition and rifles and revolvers.’ He led the way to a spot about twenty yards from the camels where some long desert grass rustled about their legs. He stooped and dug into the soft sand with his hands.

‘Here,’ he said.

Trench flung himself upon the ground beside him and scooped with both hands, making all the while an inhuman whimpering

sound with his mouth, like the noise a foxhound makes at a cover. There was something rather horrible to Feversham in his attitude as he scraped at the ground on his knees, at the action of his hands—quick, like the movements of a dog's paws, and in the whine of his voice. He was sunk for the time into an animal. In a moment or two Trench's fingers touched the lock and trigger of a rifle, and he became man again. He stood up quietly with the rifle in his hands. The other arms were unearthed, the ammunition shared.

'Now,' said Trench, and he laughed with a great thrill of joy in the laugh. 'Now I don't mind. Let them follow from Omdurman! One thing is certain now. I shall never go back there; no, not even if they overtake us,' and he fondled the rifle which he held and spoke to it as though it lived.

Two of the Arabs mounted the old camels and rode slowly away to Omdurman. Abou Fatma and the other remained with the fugitives. They mounted and trotted north-eastwards. No more than a quarter of an hour had elapsed since they had first halted at Abou Fatma's word.

All that night they rode through halfa grass and mimosa trees and went but slowly, but they came about sunrise on to flat, bare ground broken with small hillocks.

'Are the Effendi tired?' asked Abou Fatma. 'Will they stop and eat? There is food upon the saddle of each camel.'

'No; we can eat as we go.'

Dates and bread and a draught of water from a zamsheyeh made up their meal, and they ate it as they sat their camels. These, indeed, now that they were free of the long desert grass, trotted at their quickest pace. And at sunset that evening they stopped and rested for an hour. All through that night they rode and the next day, straining their own endurance and that of the beasts they were mounted on, now ascending on to high and rocky ground, now traversing a valley, and now trotting fast across plains of honey-coloured sand. Yet to each man the pace seemed always as slow as a funeral. A mountain would lift itself above the rim of the horizon at sunrise, and for the whole livelong day it stood before their eyes, and was never a foot higher or an inch nearer. At times some men tilling a scanty patch of sorghum would send the fugitives' hearts leaping in their throats, and they must make a wide detour; or again a caravan would be sighted in the far distance by the keen eyes of Abou Fatma, and they

made their camels kneel and lay crouched behind a rock, with their loaded rifles in their hands. Ten miles from Abu Klea a relay of fresh camels awaited them, and upon these they travelled, keeping a day's march westward of the Nile. Thence they passed through the desert country of the Ababdeh, and came in sight of a broad grey tract stretching across their path.

'The road from Berber to Merowi,' said Abou Fatma. 'North of it we turn east to the river. We cross that road to-night, and if God wills to-morrow evening we shall have crossed the Nile.'

'If God wills,' said Trench. 'If only He wills,' and he glanced about him in a fear which only increased the nearer they drew towards safety. They were in a country traversed by the caravans; it was no longer safe to travel by day. They dismounted, and all that day they lay hidden behind a belt of shrubs upon some high ground and watched the road and the people like specks moving along it. They came down and crossed it in the darkness, and for the rest of that night travelled hard towards the river. As the day broke Abou Fatma again bade them halt. They were in a desolate open country, whereon the smallest projection was magnified by the surrounding flatness. Feversham and Trench gazed eagerly to their right. Somewhere in that direction and within the range of their eyesight flowed the Nile, but they could not see it.

'We must build a circle of stones,' said Abou Fatma, 'and you must lie close to the ground within it. I will go forward to the river, and see that the boat is ready and that our friends are prepared for us. I shall come back after dark.'

They gathered the stones quickly and made a low wall about a foot high; within this wall Feversham and Trench laid themselves down upon the ground with a water-skin and their rifles at their sides.

'You have dates, too,' said Abou Fatma.

'Yes.'

'Then do not stir from the hiding place till I come back. I will take your camels, and bring you back fresh ones in the evening.' And in company with his fellow Arab he rode off towards the river.

Trench and Feversham dug out the sand within the stones and lay down, watching the horizon between the interstices. For both of them this perhaps was the longest day of their lives. They were so near to safety and yet not safe. To Trench's

thinking it was longer than a night in the House of Stone, and to Feversham longer than even one of those days six years back when he had sat in his rooms above St. James's Park and waited for the night to fall before he dared venture out into the streets. They were so near to Berber, and the pursuit must needs be close behind. Feversham lay wondering how he had ever found the courage to venture himself in Berber. They had no shade to protect them; all day the sun burnt pitilessly upon their backs, and within the narrow circle of stones they had no room wherein to move. They spoke hardly at all. The sunset, however, came at the last, the friendly darkness gathered about them, and a cool wind rustled through the darkness across the desert.

'Listen!' said Trench, and both men as they strained their ears heard the soft padding of camels very near at hand. A moment later a low whistle brought them out of their shelter.

'We are here,' said Feversham quietly.

'God be thanked,' said Abou Fatma. 'I have good news for you, and bad news too. The boat is ready, our friends are waiting for us, camels are prepared for you on the caravan track by the river bank to Abu Hamed. But your escape is known, and the roads and the ferries are closely watched. Before sunrise we must have struck inland from the eastern bank of the Nile.'

They crossed the river cautiously about one o'clock of the morning, and sank the boat upon the far side of the stream. The camels were waiting for them, and they travelled inland and more slowly than suited the anxiety of the fugitives. For the ground was thickly covered with boulders, and the camels could seldom proceed at any pace faster than a walk. And all through the next day they lay hidden again within a ring of stones while the camels were removed to some high ground where they could graze. During the next night, however, they made good progress, and, coming to the groves of Abu Hamed in two days, rested for twelve hours there and mounted upon a fresh relay. From Abu Hamed their road lay across the great Nubian Desert.

Nowadays the traveller may journey through the two hundred and forty miles of that waterless plain of coal-black rocks and yellow sand, and sleep in his berth upon the way. The morning will show to him, perhaps, a tent, a great pile of coal, a water tank, and a number painted on a white signboard, and the stoppage of the train will inform him that he has come to a station. Let him put his head from the window, he will see the long line of

telegraph poles reaching from the sky's rim behind him to the sky's rim in front, and huddling together, as it seems, with less and less space between them the farther they are away. Twelve hours will enclose the beginning and the end of his journey, unless the engine break down or the rail be blocked. But in the days when Feversham and Trench escaped from Omdurman progression was not so easy a matter. They kept eastward of the present railway and along the line of wells among the hills. And on the second night of this stage of their journey Trench shook Feversham by the shoulder and waked him up.

'Look,' he said, and he pointed to the south. 'To-night there's no Southern Cross.' His voice broke with emotion. 'For six years, for every night of six years, until this night, I have seen the Southern Cross. How often have I lain awake watching it, wondering whether the night would ever come when I should not see those four slanting stars! I tell you, Feversham, this is the first moment when I have really dared to think that we should escape.'

Both men sat up and watched the southern sky with prayers of thankfulness in their hearts; and when they fell asleep it was only to wake up again and again with a fear that they would after all still see that constellation blazing low down towards the earth, and to fall asleep again confident of the issue of their desert ride. At the end of seven days they came to Shof-el-Ain, a tiny well set in a barren valley between featureless ridges, and by the side of that well they camped. They were in the country of the Amrab Arabs, and had come to an end of their peril.

'We are safe,' cried Abou Fatma. 'God is good. Northwards to Assouan, westwards to Wadi Halfa, we are safe!' And spreading a cloth upon the ground in front of the kneeling camels, he heaped dhurra before them. He even went so far in his gratitude as to pat one of the animals upon the neck, and it immediately turned upon him and snarled.

Trench reached out his hand to Feversham.

'Thank you,' he said simply.

'No need of thanks,' answered Feversham, and he did not take the hand. 'I served myself from first to last.'

'You have learned the churlishness of a camel,' cried Trench. 'A camel will carry you where you want to go, will carry you till it drops dead, and yet if you show your gratitude it resents and bites. Hang it all, Feversham, there's my hand.'

Feversham untied a knot in the breast of his jibbeh and took out three white feathers, two small, the feathers of a heron, the other large, an ostrich feather broken from a fan.

‘Will you take yours back?’

‘Yes.’

‘You know what to do with it.’

‘Yes. There shall be no delay.’

Feversham wrapped the remaining feathers carefully away in a corner of his ragged jibbeh and tied them safe.

‘We shake hands, then,’ said he, and as their hands met he added, ‘To-morrow morning we part company.’

‘Part company, you and I—after the year in Omdurman, the weeks of flight?’ exclaimed Trench. ‘Why? There’s no more to be done. Castleton’s dead. You keep the feather which he sent, but he is dead. You can do nothing with it. You must come home.’

‘Yes,’ answered Feversham, ‘but after you, certainly not with you. You go on to Assouan and Cairo. At each place you will find friends to welcome you. I shall not go with you.’

Trench was silent for a while. He understood Feversham’s reluctance, he saw that it would be easier for Feversham if he were to tell his story first to Ethne Eustace, and without Feversham’s presence.

‘I ought to tell you no one knows why you resigned your commission, or of the feathers we sent. We never spoke of it. We agreed never to speak, for the honour of the regiment. I can’t tell you how glad I am that we all agreed and kept to the agreement,’ he said.

‘Perhaps you will see Durrance,’ said Feversham; ‘if you do give him a message from me. Tell him that the next time he asks me to come and see him, whether it is in England or Wadi Halfa, I will accept the invitation.’

‘Which way will you go?’

‘To Wadi Halfa,’ said Feversham, pointing westwards over his shoulder. ‘I shall take Abou Fatma with me and travel slowly and quietly down the Nile. The other Arab will guide you into Assouan.’

They slept that night in security beside the well, and the next morning they parted company. Trench was the first to ride off, and as his camel rose to its feet, ready for the start, he bent down towards Feversham, who passed him the nose rein.

'Ramelton, that was the name? I shall not forget.'

'Yes, Ramelton,' said Feversham; 'there's a ferry across Lough Swilly to Rathmullen. You must drive the twelve miles to Ramelton. But you may not find her there.'

'If not there, I shall find her somewhere else. Make no mistake, Feversham, I shall find her.'

And Trench rode forward, alone with his Arab guide. More than once he turned his head and saw Feversham still standing by the well; more than once he was strongly drawn to stop and ride back to that solitary figure, but he contented himself with waving his hand, and even that salute was not returned.

Feversham, indeed, had neither thought nor eyes for the companion of his flight. His six years of hard probation had come this morning to an end, and yet he was more sensible of a certain loss and vacancy than of any joy. For six years, through many trials, through many falterings, his mission had strengthened and sustained him. It seemed to him now that there was nothing more wherewith to occupy his life. Ethne? No doubt she was long since married . . . and there came upon him all at once a great bitterness of despair for that futile, unnecessary mistake made by him six years ago. He saw again the room in London overlooking the quiet trees and lawns of St. James's Park, he heard the knock upon the door, he took the telegram from his servant's hand.

He roused himself finally with the recollection that after all the work was not quite done. There was his father, who just at this moment was very likely reading his *Times* after breakfast upon the terrace of Broad Place among the pine trees upon the Surrey hills. He must visit his father, he must take that fourth feather back to Ramelton. There was a telegram, too, which must be sent to Lieutenant Sutch at Suakin.

He mounted his camel and rode slowly with Abou Fatma westwards towards Wadi Halfa. But the sense of loss did not pass from him that day, nor his anger at the act of folly which had brought about his downfall. The wooded slopes of Ramelton were very visible to him across the shimmer of the desert air. In the greatness of his depression Harry Feversham upon this day for the first time doubted his faith in 'the afterwards.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

FEVERSHAM RETURNS TO RAMELTON.

ON an August morning of the same year Harry Feversham rode across the Lennon bridge into Ramelton. The fierce suns of the Soudan had tanned his face, the years of his probation had left their marks; he rode up the narrow street of the town unrecognised. At the top of the hill he turned into the broad highway which, descending valleys and climbing hills, runs in one straight line to Letterkenny. He rode rather quickly in a company of ghosts.

The intervening years had gradually been dropping from his thoughts all through his journey across Egypt and the Continent. They were no more than visionary now. Nor was he occupied with any dream of the things which might have been but for his great fault. The things which had been, here, in this small town of Ireland, were too definite. Here he had been most happy, here he had known the uttermost of his misery; here his presence had brought pleasure, here too he had done his worst harm. Once he stopped when he was opposite to the church set high above the road upon his right hand, and wondered whether Ethne was still at Ramelton—whether old Dermot was alive, and what kind of welcome he would receive. But he waked in a moment to the knowledge that he was sitting upon his horse in the empty road and in the quiet of an August morning. There were larks singing in the pale blue above his head; a landrail sent up its harsh cry from the meadow on the left; the crow of a cock rose clear from the valley. He looked about him, and rode briskly on down the incline in front of him and up the ascent beyond. He rode again with his company of ghosts—phantoms of people with whom upon this road he had walked and ridden and laughed, ghosts of old thoughts and recollected words. He came to a thick grove of trees, a broken fence, a gateway with no gate. Inattentive to these evidences of desertion, he turned in at the gate and rode along a weedy and neglected drive. At the end of it he came to an open space before a ruined house. The aspect of the tumbling walls and unroofed rooms roused him at last completely from his absorption. He dismounted, and, tying his horse to the branch of a tree, ran quickly into the house and

called aloud. No voice answered him. He ran from deserted room to deserted room. He descended into the garden, but no one came to meet him; and he understood now from the uncut grass upon the lawn, the tangled disorder of the flowerbeds, that no one would come. He mounted his horse again, and rode back at a sharp trot. In Ramelton he stopped at the inn, gave his horse to the ostler, and ordered lunch for himself. He said to the landlady who waited upon him:

'So Lennon House has been burned down? When was that?'

'Five years ago,' the landlady returned, 'just five years ago this summer.' And she proceeded, without further invitation, to give a voluminous account of the conflagration and the cause of it, the ruin of the Eustace family, the inebriety of Bastable, and the death of Dermot Eustace at Glenalla. 'But we hope to see the house rebuilt. It's likely to be, we hear, when Miss Eustace is married,' she said, in a voice which suggested that she was full of interesting information upon the subject of Miss Eustace's marriage. Her guest, however, did not respond to the invitation.

'And where does Miss Eustace live now?'

'At Glenalla,' she replied. 'Half way on the road to Rathmullen there's a track leads up to your left. It's a poor mountain village is Glenalla, and no place for Miss Eustace at all, at all. Perhaps you will be wanting to see her?'

'Yes. I shall be glad if you will order my horse to be brought round to the door,' said the man; and he rose from the table to put an end to the interview.

The landlady, however, was not so easily dismissed. She stood at the door and remarked:

'Well, that's curious—that's most curious. For only a fortnight ago a gentleman burnt just as black as yourself stayed a night here on the same errand. He asked for Miss Eustace's address, and drove up to Glenalla. Perhaps you have business with her?'

'Yes, I have business with Miss Eustace,' the stranger returned. 'Will you be good enough to give orders about my horse?'

While he was waiting for his horse he looked through the leaves of the hotel-book, and saw under a date towards the end of July the name of Colonel Trench.

'You will come back, sir, to-night?' said the landlady as he mounted.

'No,' he answered, 'I do not think I shall come again to Ramelton.' And he rode down the hill, and once more that day crossed the Lennon bridge. Four miles on he came to the track opposite a little bay of the Lough, and, turning into it, he rode past a few white cottages up to the purple hollow of the hills. It was about five o'clock when he came to the long, straggling village. It seemed very quiet and deserted, and built without any plan. A few cottages stood together, then came a gap of fields, beyond that a small plantation of larches and a house which stood by itself. Beyond the house was another gap, through which he could see straight down to the water of the Lough, shining in the afternoon sun, and the white gulls poising and swooping above it. And after passing that gap he came to a small grey church, standing bare to the winds upon its tiny plateau. A pathway of white shell-dust led from the door of the church to the little wooden gate. As he came level with the gate a collie dog barked at him from behind it.

The rider looked at the dog, which was very grey about the muzzle. He noticed its marking, and stopped his horse altogether. He glanced towards the church, and saw that the door stood open. At once he dismounted; he fastened his horse to the fence, and entered the churchyard. The collie thrust its muzzle into the back of his knee, sniffed once or twice doubtfully, and suddenly broke into an exuberant welcome. The collie dog had a better memory than the landlady of the inn. He barked, wagged his tail, crouched and sprang at the stranger's shoulders, whirled round and round in front of him, burst into sharp, excited screams of pleasure, ran up to the church door and barked furiously there, then ran back and jumped again upon his friend. The man caught the dog as it stood up with its forepaws upon his chest, patted it, and laughed. Suddenly he ceased laughing, and stood stock-still with his eyes towards the open door of the church. In the doorway Ethne Eustace was standing. He put the dog down, and slowly walked up the path towards her. She waited on the threshold without moving, without speaking. She waited, watching him, until he came close to her. Then she said simply:

'Harry.'

She was silent after that; nor did he speak. All the ghosts

and phantoms of old thoughts in whose company he had travelled the whole of that day vanished away from his mind at her simple utterance of his name. Six years had passed since his feet crushed the gravel on the dawn of a June morning beneath her window. And they looked at one another, remarking the changes which those six years had brought. And the changes, unnoticed and almost imperceptible to those who had lived daily in their company, sprang very distinct to the eyes of these two. Feversham was thin, his face was wasted. The strain of life in the House of Stone had left its signs about his sunken eyes and in the look of age beyond his years. But these were not the only changes, as Ethne noticed; they were not, indeed, the most important ones. Her heart, although she stood so still and silent, went out to him in grief for the great troubles which he had endured; but she saw, too, that he came back without a thought of anger towards her for that fourth feather snapped from her fan. But she was clear-eyed even at this moment. She saw much more. She understood that the man who stood quietly before her now was not the same man whom she had last seen in the hall of Ramelton. There had been a timidity in his manner in those days, a peculiar diffidence, a continual expectation of other men's contempt, which had gone from him. He was now quietly self-possessed; not arrogant; on the other hand, not diffident. He had put himself to a long, hard test; and he knew that he had not failed. All that she saw; and her face lightened as she said:

'It is not all harm which has come of these years. They were not wasted.'

But Feversham thought of her lonely years in this village of Glenalla—and thought with a man's thought, unaware that nowhere else would she have chosen to live. He looked into her face, and saw the marks of the years upon it. It was not that she had aged so much. Her big grey eyes shone as clearly as before, the colour was still as bright upon her cheeks. But there was more of character; she had suffered; she had eaten of the tree of knowledge.

'I am sorry,' he said. 'I did you a great wrong six years ago, and I need not.'

She held out her hand to him.

'Will you give it me, please?'

And for a moment he did not understand.

'That fourth feather,' she said.

He drew his letter-case from his coat, and shook two feathers out into the palm of his hand. The larger one, the ostrich feather, he held out to her. But she said :

'Both.'

There was no reason why he should keep Castleton's feather any longer. He handed them both to her, since she asked for them, and she clasped them, and with a smile treasured them against her breast.

'I have the four feathers now,' she said.

'Yes,' answered Feversham; 'all four. What will you do with them?'

Ethne's smile became a laugh.

'Do with them!' she cried in scorn. 'I shall do nothing with them. I shall keep them. I am very proud to have them to keep.'

She kept them, as she had once kept Harry Feversham's portrait. There was something perhaps in Durrance's contention that women so much more than men gather up their experiences and live upon them, looking backwards. Feversham, at all events, would now have dropped the feathers then and there and crushed them into the dust of the path with his heel; they had done their work. They could no longer reproach, they were no longer needed to encourage, they were dead things. Ethne, however, held them tight in her hand; to her they were not dead.

'Colonel Trench was here a fortnight ago,' she said. 'He told me you were bringing it back to me.'

'But he did not know of the fourth feather,' said Feversham. 'I never told any man that I had it.'

'Yes. You told Colonel Trench on your first night in the House of Stone at Omdurman. He told me. I no longer hate him,' she added, but without a smile and quite seriously, as though it was an important statement which needed careful recognition.

'I am glad of that,' said Feversham. 'He is a great friend of mine.'

Ethne was silent for a moment or two. Then she said :

'I wonder whether you have forgotten our drive from Ramelton to our house when I came to fetch you from the quay? We were alone in the dog-cart, and we spoke——'

'Of the friends whom one knows for friends the first moment,

and whom one seems to recognise even though one has never seen them before,' interrupted Feversham. 'Indeed I remember.'

'And whom one never loses whether absent or dead,' continued Ethne. 'I said that one could always be sure of such friends, and you answered——'

'I answered that one could make mistakes,' again Feversham interrupted.

'Yes, and I disagreed. I said that one might seem to make mistakes, and perhaps think so for a long while, but that in the end one would be proved not to have made them. I have often thought of those words. I remembered them very clearly when Captain Willoughby brought to me the first feather, and with a great deal of remorse. I remember them again very clearly to-day, although I have no room in my thoughts for remorse. I was right, you see, and I should have clung firmly to my faith. But I did not.' Her voice shook a little, and pleaded as she went on: 'I was young. I knew very little. I was unaware how little. I judged hastily, but to-day I understand.'

She opened her hand and gazed for a while at the white feathers. Then she turned and went inside the church. Feversham followed her.

(To be continued.)

